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ESSAYS ON MOGUL ART

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BY

W. E. GLADSTONE SOLOMON

Director of the Bombay School of Art

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KAISER-I-HIND MEDAL (FIRST CLASS); MEMBER, ROYAL BRITISH COLONIAL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS; DIRECTOR OF THE BOMBAY SCHOOL OF ART; CURATOR, ART SECTION, PRINCE OF WALES MUSEUM OF WESTERN INDIA

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PLATE I

THE KING OF GOLCONDA

Size : 7″ × 4″

The original is in Sir Akbar Hydari's Collection.

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To
My Students
Past and Present
this book
is affectionately
inscribed

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PREFACE

The studies included in this volume were published in the Indian quarterly journal *Islamic Culture* at intervals from 1927 to 1932. They have been revised by me and arranged in a different sequence to that in which they originally appeared. Several of them have been reprinted, from time to time, in the Sunday editions of *The Bombay Chronicle*, a very encouraging sign of public interest.

In issuing these essays, with some additions, in book form I venture to hope that they may lead a wider circle of readers to consider not only these but many other aspects of the subject; for Mogul art is a diamond with innumerable facets. Of the nine studies in this book, five deal with different phases of Mogul painting, two with aspects of Mogul architecture, and two with the relations of Mogul art to present day controversies.[1] The retrospective point of view in Indian art must at best be a barren business unless its lessons are considered, and applied to the problems of our own times; and I have lived too long among Indian art students to be able to think of any aspect of Indian art as wholly of the past. As to controversial aspects, no one who writes sincerely about Indian art today can ignore them; and only cowardice or the most exemplary tact (which sometimes amounts to the same thing) could have induced me to stay safely under shelter while my comrades are on the beleagured walls. Mr Frank Rutter has well observed in his *Evolution in Modern Art*: 'There can be no Growth without Change. There can be no Change without Controversy.' Whether

[1] Another of the series, which contained a general survey of the subject, was republished in my book, *Mural Paintings of the Bombay School.*

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much of the criticism on Indian art of our time has been on the right lines or not, has become a question of far greater importance to India and her friends than the discussion of periods, styles, dates, and attributions in Indian art.

This book emanates from Bombay which has been persistently criticized by Mr E. B. Havell, and his disciples, ever since he published his erratic *Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India* in 1912. Since that work's appearance almost all written criticism on contemporary art in India has been strongly biased. In 1925 the Press attack upon my own view was opened by the same pen, and it has been continued with singular asperity by numerous protagonists of Bengal ever since. If, after many years of patience, Western India has lately begun to reply to the biased and over-confident challenge of its critics, we who live and work for art in the most colourful and most richly endowed (both as to the past and present) of all the art-producing districts of India, cannot fairly be accused of an unprovoked or unnecessary display of the provincial spirit.

I would take this opportunity of thanking Mr Marmaduke Pickthall, the editor of *Islamic Culture*, for his interest and encouragement, without which some of these essays would have remained unwritten; the Chairman and Board of Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India for their permission to make use of many of the pictures in that institution; Sir Akbar Hydari for allowing me to reproduce one of the pictures from the collection which he has lent to the Museum; and the Times of India Press for the picture of Udaipur.

W. E. G. S.

Bombay
3 September 1932

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NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Most of the pictures reproduced in this volume were selected from the collections of Indian pictures in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. These collections are divided into several distinct sections, which have been added from time to time since the project of the Museum began many years ago. The nucleus was the collection purchased by the Museum Trustees, with the assistance of a large sum contributed by the Government of Bombay, from the late Mr P. Mavji in 1915. The illustrations from these pictures are: *Shah Jahan, Camels Fighting, Black Buck and Doe, Aurangzeb as a Young Man, Aurangzeb as an Old Man, A Mogul Prince, Sadhus and Musicians, The King of Golconda,* and *Dara and Shafur Sheko.*

In 1924 Lady Ratan Tata presented the Prince of Wales Museum with a number of Indian pictures, from which I have selected *A Fair Lady, A King's Daughter, The Lady of the Terrace* and *The Taj Mahal,* a painting on ivory.

Sir Akbar Hydari lent a number of pictures from his private collection to the Museum in 1925. I have shown one of these, the frontispiece, *The King of Golconda* (sometimes described as the 'Portrait of a Nobleman').

The Trustees purchased eight Mogul pictures from the well-known collection of the late Rao Bahadur Parasnis of Satara, in 1929; of these two are reproduced: *Mogul Princesses by Moonlight* (attributed to Manohar), and *Jahangir at Ajmer* (attributed to Govardhan).

A great many of the pictures in these collections bear inscriptions in Persian, which sometimes allude to the subjects depicted. Others show little relation to the subject of the painting, and seem to refer (in laudatory terms) to

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some patron or *inamorata* of the artist or scribe. Several pictures are devoid of inscriptions or names. I have attempted in the notes to describe the reproductions sufficiently to give those who cannot see the originals, some idea of their colour values.

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INTRODUCTION

Hast thou heard the story of the pumpkin-creeper which grew under a poplar tree? It sprang and ran with great rapidity; after which, one day it asked the poplar, 'What is thy age?' 'About twice twenty years,' replied the poplar. The creeper said, 'I have outgrown thee in length within twenty days; why dost thou not grow correspondingly, instead of being so indolent and lazy?' The aged poplar replied, 'O my friend; it is of no avail to discuss the question with thee today. Let the wind blow, and the sun shine strongly tomorrow, and it will be clear to thyself as to which of us was rash and which is wise.'

Inscription in Persian on the reverse
of a Mogul picture

An experience of fifteen years in India, thirteen of which have been spent working for and with Indian art students, has convinced me of the very radical and far-reaching differences between the subjective and the objective views of Indian art. Nearly all the art criticism for a generation past on this theme has been on subjective lines, and this has led to doctrinaire and unpractical theories about this subject which are singularly unhelpful at the present time, because they are far removed from the realities of the case.

Indeed so many writers, nowadays, are treating Indian art as a mystical, or 'occult' or strictly-to-be-segregated section of painting and sculpture, that it has become necessary for people who know, and deeply admire India, and have strong faith in the living Indian's artistic genius, to make a stand on behalf of a really sane, clear-headed view of the art problems facing India today. It is certain

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that the tendency on the part of a dominant group of art critics to import into the art of the Indian sub-continent hints of a strange, if not unique mystery, though it may excite the natural curiosity of the eager Western reader, has obscured the important issues before the public in our generation, and greatly retarded the proper understanding of India's artistic difficulties, by the Western world.

This obscurantism has been a fruitful producer of the mystification, pedantry, and provincialism in art criticism which has hampered India's genuine claims (and these, the reader may rest assured, are neither empty nor slight) in the eyes of the thinking people abroad, and in India itself. The critics write obscurely about Indian art, for it is a topic which the British and American public have long been told must be obscure, and even abstruse. So writers and talkers on Indian art are full of this special knowledge which gives them prestige in the eyes of many readers, who diffidently believe that the subject of Art in India must be exceptionally difficult; for is not India the land of mystery?

The reader who is interested in India will be in a position to realize something of the amazing conclusions which our mystical art critics have arrived at, by perusing the following extracts from Mr E. B. Havell's second edition of *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, page 5:—'For as Mr Laurence Binyon has well said, the supreme aesthetic quality of the great religious art of India lies in the fact that it is not self-conscious. "Design, colour, composition, all the purely artistic elements of their work were left to the more intuitive activities of their mind... it solves difficult problems not by scientifically working out a theory, but simply *ambulando*" ... Until the Nineteenth Century India has solved all her

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artistic problems in her own simple way—*ambulando*.' Now this is admirable propaganda for 'the Mysterious East', and its still more mysterious exponents; but imagine any Principal of an Art School in India throwing such hard crumbs of tuition as these to his students, Hindu, Mohammedan, Parsee, and Christian! Such a weird explanation of the working of art in India would definitely place the Indian artist in a different class, or rather species, from the denizens of the rest of the world, who, however gifted with genius, still *learn*, as they always had to learn, how to draw and paint, and still believe that *painting is an art as well as an inspiration*. And although it is highly flattering to India to assert that she can do by magic what the rest of the world vainly tries to do by taking pains, yet the genuine Indian artist (as I have found him) is as shy of swallowing the gross exaggerations of his futile flatterers, as Alexander was shy (for the wiser part of his career) of the parasites who told him that he was the son of a god.

Mr Laurence Binyon has indeed carried his mystical revelation on Indian art (for critical comment it certainly is not) a stage further in his introduction to the latest book on Ajanta,[1] by Mr G. Yazdani. Mr Binyon, 'than whom,' says Mr Yazdani in his Preface, 'there is perhaps no greater authority on the art of the East at the present time,' thus admits his failure to expound critically the Ajanta mural paintings: 'One comes in the end to recognize that

[1] In his contribution to Lady Herringham's book, *Ajanta*, published in 1915, Mr Laurence Binyon wrote: 'It is a kind of impertinence in one who has not seen the original frescoes to write about them.' In his introduction to Mr Yazdani's book (*Ajanta*, Part I, 1930) he says, 'I have never seen Ajanta'. Mr Binyon may have noticed in the interim that this disability, which, in regard to a treatise on Western art would be considered as final, is no drawback to a writer on Indian art. Three notable instances of this anomaly are mentioned in this introduction.

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profound conceptions can dispense with the formulas of calculated surface arrangement and have their own occult means of knitting together forms in apparent diffusion.' Even so eminent a scholar as Dr Coomaraswamy has approvingly quoted this extraordinary view, as though it were the satisfactory solution of the whole matter, in his *Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia*.[1]

There are of course no supernatural or 'occult' qualities in the Ajanta mural paintings to distinguish them from, say, the work of Benozzo Gozzoli, or Paolo Uccello. If we take each separate composition and examine it on its own merits, and *not* necessarily in relation to other scenes painted (in the course of many generations) above, below, and all round, it will usually be found to be as reasoned and practical a lesson for art students all the world over, in the rules of design and composition, as old John Burnet's sturdy *Essays on Art*.

The critics' obsession with old Temple rituals is also typical of the cult of the 'New Bengal School' of criticism, which

[1] 'The paintings at Ajanta, certainly lacking in those obvious symmetries which are described in modern text books of composition, have been called incoherent. This is in fact a mode of design not thought out as pattern with a view to pictorial effect; yet "one comes in the end to recognize that profound conceptions, etc . . . ."' In a small book of mine, published in 1923, entitled *Jottings at Ajanta*, I wrote on this subject as follows: 'As to the crowded nature of the paintings, Indian legend is always crowded, and much had to be shown in most limited space. A survey of the famous Simhala "Jatika" of the Seventeeth Cave, shows how admirably the artist has arranged his pictorial narrative, keeping his great subject—the battle—with which to make a strong centre for his composition. The grand upward sweep of the Rakshashis (vampires) right across the wall with its adjoining angle is a magnificent tribute to the mental alacrity of the Painter who conceived and executed it. *Taking each subject separately* we are, in the best work, delighted by the skill with which heads are spotted in, points arranged, and accessories put to the finest decorative use possible. . . . . These men had consummate knowledge of how to get the very most out of a line, how to vary the tones of their figures, how to combine their groups.'

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started with Mr Havell, and has inundated the subject with its extravagance. On page 37 of his *Ideals of Indian Art* we find Mr Havell quoting from M. Foucher's *Etude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde* 'extracts from various Tantric manuscripts of the Twelfth Century relating to this subject'. Mr Havell gives us almost verbatim from M. Foucher, who in turn gives it from the Tantric manuscripts, the same ritual which later writers have thought it worth while, in all seriousness, to dish up all over again on their own account. After leading us step by step through the whole series of rites and incantations to the desirable moment (which would have greatly interested Paracelsus or Doctor Dee) when 'the apparition of the god or goddess presents itself to the artist's mental vision "like a reflection in a mirror" or "as in a dream"', Mr Havell naively observes: 'This might be a description of the ecstasy of an artist monk in medieval Europe. But whereas the Western mystic seems to have allowed himself to be carried away more or less unconsciously by an unbalanced and uncontrolled access of emotionalism, the practice of Yoga in India, recognized as a branch of philosophy, was from the earliest times, reduced to a scientific system.'[1] Mr Havell is mixing up art with mysticism in his usual bewildering manner.[2] No wonder that one of the few really constructive art critics who are dealing with Indian art today, Mr Kanaiyalal Vakil, has written in his *Rock-cut Temples around Bombay*: 'Indian Architecture and Sculpture were not, as the academic revivalists would have us believe, merely the literal transcript from craftsmen's codes or manuals, or from the canons of temple rituals . . .

[1] *The Ideals of Indian Art*, pages 38-9.

[2] For examples, see the essay 'Indian Art and Modern Criticism', *post*.

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How few, very few, of the loud-toned, sentimental, and pedantic exponents of Indian Art have begun, or rather learnt to look at the artistic achievements of India . . . One of the incredible enigmas of the current fashionable literature on Indian art is the amazing complacency with which its exponents speak of Indian Sculpture uniformly, and, as it were, in the bulk.' [1]

As to the lengths to which the upholders of the essentially gnostic view—for what else do they attribute to Indian artists except a secret key to the practice of art hidden from others?—are prepared to go, we hvae recently had practical evidence in the outburst of wondering, indeed impassioned adulation with which the group of critics who always acclaim Bengal and its champions, received the public exhibition of the pictures of the septuagenarian poet, Dr Rabindranath Tagore, who, to quote the ingenuous explanation of the public press, 'has lately taken to painting'. It is certainly not every day that anyone who has 'lately taken to painting' (especially at the age of seventy) is cited as a great authority on the subject! It is the latest triumph of the subconscious self, of course,—the victory of *ambulando* over knowledge, skill, and craftsmanship. Fortunately we may safely appeal to the opinion of a sure witness on the subject of the 'occult' in art; no less a man than Coleridge himself, 'the greatest master of the super-natural among all poets of all time' as Swinburne has styled him. Coleridge maintained the indivisible unity of the fine arts and the fundamental application of similar 'rules' to poetry and painting: 'This definition applies equally to painting and music as well as poetry; and in truth the term poetry is alike applicable to all three.' Coleridge was roused by what he

[1] Page 150 *et. seq.*

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called the wide-spread view of 'Shakespeare as a sort of beautiful *lusus naturae*, a delightful monster, wild indeed, and without taste or judgment . . . uttering, amid the strangest follies, the sublimest truths'. He has pointed out with consummate skill the inevitable conclusion: 'If all this be true, we must submit to it; *though to a thinking mind it cannot but be painful to find any excellence merely human, thrown out of all human analogy, and thereby leaving us neither rules for imitation, nor motives to imitate.*' He says that this 'dangerous falsehood affords a refuge to secret self-conceit, and enables a vain man at once to escape his reader's indignation by general swollen panegyrics . . . thus leaving Shakespeare as a sort of Grand Lama, adored indeed, and his very excrements prized as relics, but with no authority or real influence . . . I have said, and I say it again, that great as was the genius of Shakespeare, his judgment was at least equal to it. *The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity, circumscribe itself by rules.*'[1] And if this 'greatest of English poets since Milton' was not too high to admit rules for the spirit of poetry,—are we really going to credit the mystical school of modern art critics which teaches that Art, in order to be truly Indian, must be 'occult' or relegated 'to the intuitive activities of the mind'?

It has become very customary to deal with Indian art strictly as a succession of periods, strongly differentiated the one from the other—Buddhist, and Mogul, for instance. This has led in our own time to some extraordinary theories and travesties of history, to many reckless generalizations, and, necessarily, to wrong or sterile conclusions. Fashionable writers on the subject have paraded endlessly their biased and artistically impracticable

[1] *Poetry, the Drama, and Shakespeare.* The italics are mine.

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theories of Indian art and history, mingling them with a wearisome belittling of European and Mogul influences. They escape from the real difficulty, which is that of helping to bring constructive and practical artistic knowledge to bear upon the problems that have confronted, and do now confront art and artists in India at this present time, by selecting these two convenient scapegoats for all the ills that Indian art is heir to. It has always seemed to me a very strong vindication of Indian shrewdness, and sound artistic perception, that on the Western side of the country, at any rate, the people have very generally rejected the fulsome flattery and narrow and stultifying theories of Mr Havell and his followers. It will be necessary to examine the errors and inconsistencies of this 'standard' author in some detail hereinafter; he is cited here chiefly as a striking illustration of the utter failure of the provincial method which has almost monopolized the field of Indian art criticism for nearly a generation.

More reasonable commentators on Indian art, however, have also shown how easy it is to lose sight of the tree, while gauging, with the skill of true woodcraft, the size and growth of the highest shoots. There are a number of such observers who have altogether ignored the lower branches, which must also be carefully studied if one wishes really to understand why that lofty tree top looks 'close against the sky'.[1] Fortunately the art students of Bombay do not encourage the enveloping of art, whether Indian or European, in the cloudy jargon of mysticism.

[1] Many critics, when they write on the subject of Indian art, do so as though they implied the Grand Style of 'Indian Art', and not any of the innumerable methods and manners, which though not grand, are essentially Indian art, even if 'art' has to be written with a small 'a'. When we speak of European painting we do not insist that everyone should try to conform to the manner of

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The theme of Indian painting is still very generally treated as a succession of cut-and-dried periods, or schools. This is all very arbitrary and rather unreal. It has become most necessary, owing to the modern revival of constructive art in Western India, to diverge from the well-trodden, but unsatisfactory route, in order to understand properly the *general* traits and *universal* characteristics of Indian art. For example it is usual to accept the era of the Ajanta Caves as the high water mark of attainment in Indian painting; from thence, *facilis decensus Averno*. The slide downwards is always begun to the tune of the Buddhist requiem; then follows the funeral panegyric over the other great Indian schools, and the inevitable comparisons with the alien Moguls, with the same tendency towards edification as is exemplified in Hogarth's pictures of the Industrious and the Idle Apprentices. This pathetic lesson in degeneration concludes, of course, with the supposed modern *debacle*, and the 'degeneration of Indian art' through that Western influence which has completed the ruin which the Moguls began. The collapse would have been complete, we are given to understand, if it had not been for the brilliant deeds of the 'New Bengal School'. This shoddy method of

---

Michaelangelo or Tintoretto. On the contrary it is the very fact that many modern painters have departed so materially from the 'Grand Style' of European painting that makes their work original and therefore interesting. But these critics ignore the very existence of the modern Indian painter of street scenes, domestic scenes, portraits, *genre*, and landscape, unless he paints these in an affected conventional manner that can somehow be claimed as the 'New Bengal School', which is simply Japanese-like water-colour painting *without* the technique of the Moguls. The modern Indian artist is very much interested in oil painting and he is interested in landscape painting; in effects of sunlight playing over natural objects, and in painting large portraits by realistic methods. These pictures sell a great deal better in India than the 'New Bengal' School's work which seeks its patrons among Europeans and Americans; for naturally the Western collector may like the zest of an oriental condiment to season his varied dish.

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exposition has become so prevalent during the last twenty-five years, and is now so thoroughly stereotyped, that anyone who openly advocates, as the Moguls did, the right of Indians to take whatever they want of European mediums and manners of painting, is held up as little better than an ignoramus, by the art critics who write about India.[1] On the contrary the student must continually contrast one age with another; the Golden Ages of Ajanta and Ellora, with the decline of Indian art, under Mogul influence, leading to the final obliterating catastrophe of the 'Western pedagogue'.

I have noticed in another place[2] the well-known fact that Mr Havell founded his 'New Bengal School' upon Mogul miniature painting. The Bombay School on the other hand has always based the work of its students upon the Ajanta Caves, which are situated in His Exalted Highness the Nizam's dominions. 'The art-producing peoples of Western India have special reasons for rejoicing at any new discoveries at Ajanta, which lies at their doors. The revival of interest in the Cave Temples of Ajanta is very distinctly dated from the pioneer work of John Griffiths, Principal of the Bombay School of Art, and his students, who copied the mural paintings at Ajanta from 1875 to 1885, and again in 1887 and 1892, a work which, among other things, resulted in the production of the standard monograph on the subject. This book has served as the basis for all subsequent investigators. Some of those who were associated in that pioneer enterprise are still with us today.' This accurate account (which is quoted from an editorial in

[1] It is entertaining to note that the same critics who deny the right of Indian painters to express themselves in a European medium or manner, see nothing incongruous in Indian poets expressing themselves in *English*.

[2] 'Indian Art and Modern Criticism.'

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the *Times of India* of 30 May 1932) goes on to 'draw attention once again to the fact that not nearly enough importance is given nowadays, by those who purport to speak historically, to what Bombay has achieved in regard to the opening-up of the Ajanta Caves. The marked and elaborate omission to recognize Western Indian effort in the copious pseudo-historical treatises on Indian Art with which the "New Bengal School" (by the way has anyone ever heard of the Old Bengal School?) has deluged India and the Anglo-Saxon world, has foisted upon a wide public the notion that there must be truth in Mr Havell's prodigious claim, "It was not until I swept away the whole system" (of Bombay) "in Calcutta, that any Indian School produced a real live artist"[1]. . . Bengal's literary satellites have spent all their eulogies upon Lady Herringham's work at Ajanta—she was there for a little over four months in all—and have "followed on" after Bombay (as is their custom) to such good effect that probably nine out of ten people in America and Europe do not realize that by far the greatest ancient Indian shrines of painting and sculpture are situated some 2000 miles distant from that only home of Indian art, Calcutta, and not just outside the Victoria Memorial.' The fact that the 'New Bengal School' was based on the small Mogul paintings is well known. It has never attained to anything approaching the perfection of the Mogul technique, and, still more curious, it has not yet learned to distinguish the necessary differences in technique between the small Mogul paintings and mural painting. A fresh proof of this extraordinary limitation to the scope of the much

[1] This statement, contained in Mr Havell's letter to Mr B. N. Treasuryvala, was published by this gentleman with a most laudatory covering epistle, in the *Times of India*, 31 December 1925.

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advertized 'New Bengal School' was recently afforded to the public by the letter written by Sir William Rothenstein, Principal of the Royal College of Art, South Kensington, to the Viceroy (extracts from which were published in *The Statesman* of 8 July 1932) about the work of the four young Bengali artists who, after studying for a year at South Kensington, had been decorating India House under their Principal's supervision. Sir William wrote: 'When they first came here they had little idea of working together. At first they had little idea of large mural painting, *their practice having been based on examples of the small Mogul paintings,* but after a year's work here their views, and their practice, broadened... Their first designs, which were too complicated, had to be scrapped and they took my detrimental criticism extremely well.'[1] I may omit most of Sir William Rothenstein's eulogy on the work of his students at India House, because when he very rashly added that 'their decoration of the dome is probably the most remarkable work achieved by contemporary Indian artists', that it was 'a triumph of art', etc., the Principal of the Royal College of Art, South Kensington, was making this proud boast without having seen the work of contemporary Indian artists in India itself. I believe that his one and only brief glimpse of India took place very many years ago. He was of course writing from hearsay evidence, just as Mr E. B. Havell did when he wrote his slashing condemnation of paintings of the Bombay School of Art (which paintings he has never seen)[2] or as Mr Laurence Binyon did when he wrote his description and revelation of the Ajanta Caves which *he* has never seen. By making comparisons between paintings which were

[1] The italics are mine.

[2] See *post*, page 73.

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produced under his own direction, and paintings which he has never even looked upon, Sir William Rothenstein was keeping well within the fashion of the 'New Bengal School's' retailers of 'Indian Art' to the public of Great Britain and the United States; but naturally the publication of these sweeping statements has raised a strong protest among the public in Western India. Mr Kanaiyalal Vakil severely commented on this remarkable letter from South Kensington: 'Did he (Sir William Rothenstein) not endeavour to "broaden" the practice of the chosen four whose work was till then "based on examples of the small Mogul painting"? And now on the basis of this "triumph" he claims not only preference for his *proteges* over the rights of other Indian artists, conveniently ignored by him, but claims as well the right, title, and authority to decide the kind of art education India ought to have. For in his now famous letter to the Viceroy he concludes that his chosen four are "now capable of training a circle of young painters"!'[1]

In one sense, of course, the history of art is the story of a falling off; the only point on which the critics differ among themselves—it is a very important point—is when and where the falling off began. Thus when we read Vasari, or John Addington Symonds, we get a very different idea of the history of European Art from that presented by the sentimental Mr Havell. This writer's inveterate dislike of the Italian Renaissance may also be contrasted with the eulogies of Ruskin and Pater. An American lady in India told me once that she 'did not like Greek Art'. She made this most portentous generalization in the most light-hearted manner, and followed it up by declaring that Japanese prints

[1] Letter in the *Times of India*, 21 July 1932.

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were the only perfect model for every nation—including India—to follow.

The chronological view of Indian art, the arbitrary divisions of its manifestations into separate categories, may be paralleled to some degree in Europe, but not nearly to the same extent; for in Western art, a certain overlapping of the different schools and nationalities, and their influences, is generally admitted. In Indian art, however, the public is invited to believe that the distinctions between certain eras ought to be considered hardly less absolute, significant, and clear than the immutable cleavage which, as many will still have it, *must* exist between East and West. And yet there is a reason—humanly speaking—to be found for most things. 'What song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though difficult questions, are not beyond all conjecture,' wrote Sir Thomas Browne. The methods of production of the masterpieces of Indian art are far less difficult questions; since they are subject to the same laws that govern all great painting and sculpture.

We cannot possibly understand Indian art if we look on it as consisting of water-tight compartments; or as a vessel that was once water-tight, but is now leaking badly, and letting in the ocean of foreign influence. We must realize that Indian *genre* and landscape painting are not, *au fond*, entirely foreign importations; that mural painting did *not* cease to be practised in India in the sixth century or so; that painting from life did *not* begin in India only about the seventeenth century; and that art did *not* vanish in India when 'glory and loveliness passed away' with the fading of the Mogul splendour.

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Let us consider the Moguls. For ever since those distant times when the world's faculty for wonder was still unabated, and the old travellers fed the avid West with thrilling stories of the magnificence of the descendants of the conquering Tartar, the Old World has been accustomed to regard the Grand Moguls as perhaps the epitome of the idea of autocracy and art. Modern writers have indeed shown how the Pathan Kings (long before Shah Jahan) were consummate architects; have seemed to trace the style which is seen at its culminating point in the Taj Mahal, back to ancient methods of building followed by Timur in Samarcand. But modern research, and even much unwarrantable modern criticism, has not yet shaken the enviable position which the Moguls have maintained in the world's esteem.

In comparatively recent times Buddhist and Hindu art have again begun to come into their own through revived interest in the Ajanta, the Ellora, and the Elephanta Caves of Western India; but while Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta speak a noble epic in sublime poetry, Agra, Fathpur Sikri, and Delhi discourse of Mogul India in a language which, if less profound, is deeply interesting, and perhaps more intimate in its appeal. Indeed Agra, the City of Akbar, makes so broad an impression, that it may be said to give us, within itself, the whole story of the Mogul: the Fort with its palaces, mosques, and battlements; the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah with its lovely tracery and workmanship (exemplifying some of the methods of wall painting and decoration); the Taj Mahal; and (only a few miles distant) Fathpur Sikri, whose red sandstone has been transmuted by

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the alchemy of the eastern sun into the semblance of burnished copper.[1]

A drive in a car along sun-chequered country roads, under avenues of peepul trees, broken by fertile glimpses of agricultural India, with the picturesque peasants, bullock-carts, buffaloes, and wells, with their patient water-drawing oxen, will bring us to the foot of the steps, at the top of which towers the Southern Gateway of Fathpur Sikri. And when we have climbed up the long flight to this portal, we are able to look far past the collection of ramshackle dwellings, clustering higgledy-piggledy below the citadel, over the immense plain.

The span of the arch above our heads is so huge as to dwarf the memory of all other gateways. In contrast to this titan's entrance, the superb little shrine of white marble —the gem of the great courtyard—seems to strike a note of humility, in spite of rich materials and lavish workmanship. Here repose the mortal remains of the venerable saint who had earned Akbar's gratitude; and the women still make devout pilgrimages to this tomb to breathe the prayer of Hannah; the perforated windows of *jali* work are gay with the coloured threads which anxious hands have bound as tokens.

It was by his own wish that a garden became the site of the Emperor Akbar's tomb at Sikandra. Across the wide shadow-patterned lawns rises the splendid pile, beneath which sleeps the man who lived to realize so many of his ambitions, and dying, achieved this—the last of them.

Fragrant and beautiful as were the resting places which received the Moguls, when they had 'shuffled off this

[1] It is said that Akbar had originally intended to build Fathpur Sikri of this metal.

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mortal coil', the carved stone and the inlaid marble were fortunately not reserved for tomb and cenotaph alone. The earthly paradise was more than merely a poet's dream with them: 'If there be a Heaven upon Earth, it is this—it is this!' wrote Shah Jahan on his palace walls at Delhi. We still read, and still endorse the proud assertion.

If Fathpur Sikri reflects one great personality, the Fort at Agra will recall more than one; for there we shall meet again the red sandstone of Akbar; there too, appear the white marbles of Jahangir. One may ramble in the Fort for many a day, without exhausting half the wealth of these memorials of a still fragrant period of Eastern art; for at every point one's imagination is caught, and enchained. Here are the apartments of the royal captive, Shah Jahan, the aged prisoner of a rebellious son; there is the 'Jasmine Tower', its delicate arch glowing with the *pietra-dura* work of semi-precious stones. Far beyond we see the distant Taj itself; the view, says the tradition, which was the last that the dying Emperor looked upon. Here are the women's apartments with the wonderful bathroom, all a-glitter with multi-coloured glass; an apartment which, by the light of its aromatic lamps, must have eclipsed the most luxurious dream of the Caliph Vathek.

Whether its domes of alabaster are veiled in shimmering mystery, or boldly stamped upon a sky of flaming blue, or burnished by the evening gold, there are few people who will forget the first view of the Taj Mahal. We go down the steps from the entrance; we wander along the terraces, beckoned onwards by the wonderful building, to feel the first spell of personal contact with these pale, languid marbles, these delicate sculptures of flowers, this fragrant, gem-studded interior. So threadbare a theme? No! Let

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us rather perceive and acknowledge here the gift of perpetual youth!

And now we walk in the flowering alleys of the Garden-Fort at Delhi, where that which remains of the Mogul's ſtately palaces is the mere veſtige of paſt magnificence—only a line of columned halls, bound together, as it were, in silver chains. These are the empty shells of the old ſtructures, and yet how their loveliness recalls to the imagination the countless rare treasures for which a case so fitting was once erected! We trace the course of the 'Stream of Paradise' which used to pour its limpid current down the white dazzling vistas with the golden shadows; across the marble saucers, carved and veined like the lotus; over the coloured lamps, set in the dainty niches; beneath the fantastic screens, as finely wrought as sculptured lace. We have followed the laſt footſteps of the Grand Moguls—having almoſt ascended, in fancy, to those sublime regions of which Milton tells:

> Where the river of Bliss through midſt of Heavn
> Rowls o're *Elisian* Flours her Amber ſtream.

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THE ESSAYS

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THE REALMS OF GOLD

A Study of Mogul Influences

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen.

Keats

The well-known adage in the ancient book, which some attribute to the wisest king of Israel, bewails the fact that 'Of making many books there is no end'. Further the same writer has postulated with equal force that 'Much study is a weariness of the flesh'. Such was responsible opinion in the year 200 B.C.—or thereabouts. And yet, on looking over a bookseller's catalogue the other day, I was struck by the quotation from a somewhat less ancient authority, which the enterprising publisher had blazoned in seductive prominence upon its cover:

'With reference to this habit of reading, I make bold to tell you that it is your pass to the greatest, the purest and the most perfect pleasure that God has prepared for His creatures.'

While in no way disputing the wisdom of the wise which has stood the wear and tear of more than two millenniums, there is a good deal to be said also for the Victorian novelist's view. For extremes still meet, and doubtless either writer could have made out a very strong case for his own side of the question.

Of all the books that be, those on Indian art are neither the least numerous nor the least interesting, and of all books on Indian art those on Mogul painting have become so

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many that an author has been roused to caution us that, if this kind of thing goes on, all this interest may serve to defeat its own purpose.[1]

A comment of this kind suggests the query: *why* is there no end to the making of these books on Mogul art? Is it because the connoisseur has 'cornered' the domain of Mogul painting? I think not. There are connoisseurs enough, but in comparison with the rest of mankind the collector of Mogul paintings is still a *rara avis*. What then is the justification for their wide appeal—for there must be this wide appeal, since even the uninitiated buy and cherish them? Wherein lies the perennial charm of this subject? —seeing that art (in these prosaic times at least) is not a theme likely to 'set the Thames on fire', or the Ganges either for the matter of that. Titian and his brother artists cannot reasonably expect to rival Sherlock Holmes and his fellow sleuths of the Law as 'best sellers' in the book-markets of the West; so it must be something more than art that makes Mogul painting so comparatively popular with the public of so many countries. There are other fields in literature and art besides fields of study,—open spaces unmarred by the vexatious notice-boards which, (especially in the close preserves of Indian art) so often warn the would-be explorer that 'Trespassers will be prosecuted'. And of these free and pleasant spaces, what field is more green and odorous than the gentle domain of Mogul painting? There, not the grandeur, the dignity, and

[1] 'In fact, the study of Indian miniature painting on the whole, if it is taken as representing India's chief contribution to art, as might be supposed from the amount of attention devoted to it in recent years, is hardly likely to lead much further than to add one more subject to the connoisseurs' hobbies and another department to the art dealer's business.'—E. B. Havell, *Asiatic Review*, July 1926, page 514.

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PLATE II

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PLATE II

A MOGUL PRINCE

Size: $7\frac{1}{4}'' \times 11\frac{1}{4}''$

This is one of the most pleasing Indian equestrian portraits I have seen. The prince is dressed in pale olive green, yellow boots, and gilded turban; the charger's trappings and bridle are gilded, and the lower portion of its body is of a pale buff colour. Some delicate mauve tints are introduced in the saddle cloth, the tip of the charger's tail, and the bridle; and there are touches of dull red in the sword belt, stirrups, and the tongue of the horse. The latter is finely, if summarily drawn, while the drawing of the prince is a good example of simplified portraiture. The beautiful effect of the whole picture is obtained with the greatest economy of colour; it is a drawing merely washed with pale tints, but how satisfying in its result!

The border is ultramarine and gold.

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the awe which impress us in that high terrain which Buddhist painting, Hindu sculpture, and Mogul architecture dominate like a triune Presence;—but there, the grace of the Springtide, the voices of singing birds and their echoes in singing hearts. Somehow a museum with its musty atmosphere seems not quite the right place for a Mogul miniature. These joyous things were not painted to be exposed in frames or cases to a garish publicity; but rather to be reverently stored by cultured men, and refined and charming women, as gems worthy of the rich portfolios which, when opened, gave up the rare fragrance of their art with the incense of musk and attar of roses. It was *not* publicity that the Mogul artist craved for his work—not a place 'on the line' in a crowded Art Exhibition, where so often nowadays pictures painted up to 'exhibition pitch' seem to shoulder one another, and try which can shout loudest for the suffrage of the public. We feel this when we look at Mogul miniatures, and feel the gracious reticence of those artists—their shrinking from the rude gaze of the Philistines, their appeal to the sympathy and discernment of an individual. And then we are led to think of the people who had these miniatures painted for them—the patrons of art of those days. What manner of men were they? And so we enter once again 'the realms of gold', and we read of the Moguls—their pomp, their palaces, but above all their taste. The Mogul miniatures, though cruelly severed from their retired setting, dragged into 'the light of common day', and hung on walls whose ugliness seems often like a profanation of their delicate beauty, are still in general the book illustrations which many of them were meant to be exclusively. One cannot enjoy these graphic records of a unique age—an age of haunting memories—

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without seeking to explore the past; the Mogul miniature is the epitome of Mogul history; and since no period more *romantic* (to use the crudest of explanations) has ever been sung in words by the poet, and in colour by the artist, we need not look further for the fascination which the book on Mogul painting can exert even over the most modern of modern men.

The relationship between this school of painting and books being a fundamental one, each partaking in part of the other's nature, it is within the natural order of things that the Mogul picture of today—or rather a facsimile reproduction of it—should illuminate the page of printed type almost as fitly as it did of old the antique scroll, whose characters and embellishments vied as works of art with the pictures.

It is no wonder that no class of picture lends itself so well to reproduction as the Mogul miniature; and it must surely be by the working of some hidden scheme of poetic justice that modern science has today done tardy honour to these long-neglected works of art, which are receiving at the hands of the lithographer the vindication of their merits for every land to see. In a very real sense, the process of colour reproduction has restored these shy products of the sheltered *proteges* of great kings and patricians to their proper place; for while the originals must often endure the raucous noise of sale rooms, and hardly more apposite encomiums of purchasers who covet them merely for a date and a name which can be converted into terms of hard cash, they still come into their own through multitudinous reduplications. These reproductions in the books find their way more frequently than do the originals into the hands of those true lovers of the past to whom the purchase of a book

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(since a picture is beyond their means) is but the satisfaction of the most honest and least earthy of mundane aspirations—

The desire of the moth for the star!

So by many a ruddy fireside in frigid old Europe, and by many a shady lattice in radiant India the Moguls are kept in green remembrance by the printing press and the lithographer's stone. Almost, the musk and the attar of roses have transferred themselves from the jewelled album, or coloured *daftar* to the pages of a quarto volume! We can retrace our steps, with the help of the pictures, which we certainly could not do without them. We can understand the written words, elucidated as it is by the graphic delineation. Thus, as we read, the old pageant passes visibly before our eyes, as clearly as the wondrous procession filed across the vision of Britomart, in that enchanted hall on every side of which was inscribed the mystical admonition, 'Be bold, be bold,—be not too bold!' We may accept the motto (as well as the analogy), and look, with courage tempered with discretion, upon the sacred persons of the Indian emperors, and their consorts, their courtiers, their knights and soldiers. We may steal a glimpse at the lover, garland in hand, repairing by the light of the moon to the terrace on which a maiden awaits him—

Lock'd up from mortal eye
In shady leaves of destiny.

We may thrill with the gusto of the great elephant fight—and applaud, as vociferously as the rest, the dexterity and courage of the mahouts; we can march to battle with the armies of Akbar the Victorious, can tread with Jahangir the soft lawns and spicy walks of Shalimar; and wait upon Shah Jahan in the Hall of Audience. Oh, yes; we know

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all that Mr Vincent Smith has to say about Shah Jahan, but none the less here is his picture, more convincing than words, and we bow low before him on his peacock throne, reverencing that great artist.

There seems to be no limit to the variety of the ever changing spectacle! Now the peacock throne and the singing girls have vanished, and we see the austere lineaments of Aurangzeb already stamped with the realization of the venerable truth, 'Vanity of Vanities—all is vanity and vexation of spirit'. And from this sad comment on the penalties of greatness we turn to the care-free birds and beasts of the jungle, or again to the merry maidens with their *sitars*, or to councillors engaged in graver and weightier matters. After this varied and wonderful induction, the drama itself, unrolled by the old travellers in their books, will indeed be understandable. We now know the world *they* are speaking of, can follow where the garrulous Manucci, the wise Bernier, or the astute Tavernier may choose to lead us. And at long last we can stand sorrowfully in the Jasmine Tower at Agra, and realize something of the pathos of that final scene that ended 'this strange eventful history' of Mogul art, when the imperial prisoner, supported by his faithful daughter, breathed his last, gazing, beyond the river, on his immortal masterpiece, the distant Taj.

It would be easy to dilate on the romantic and historical values of the Mogul school of painting, and its fascination for the wider public of taste, but insistence upon some of the features which constitute its most catholic appeal should not be overstrained, or suggest—even inferentially—that the fair fame of the works of this school rests only upon the august and picturesque subjects with which it chiefly deals. Such a

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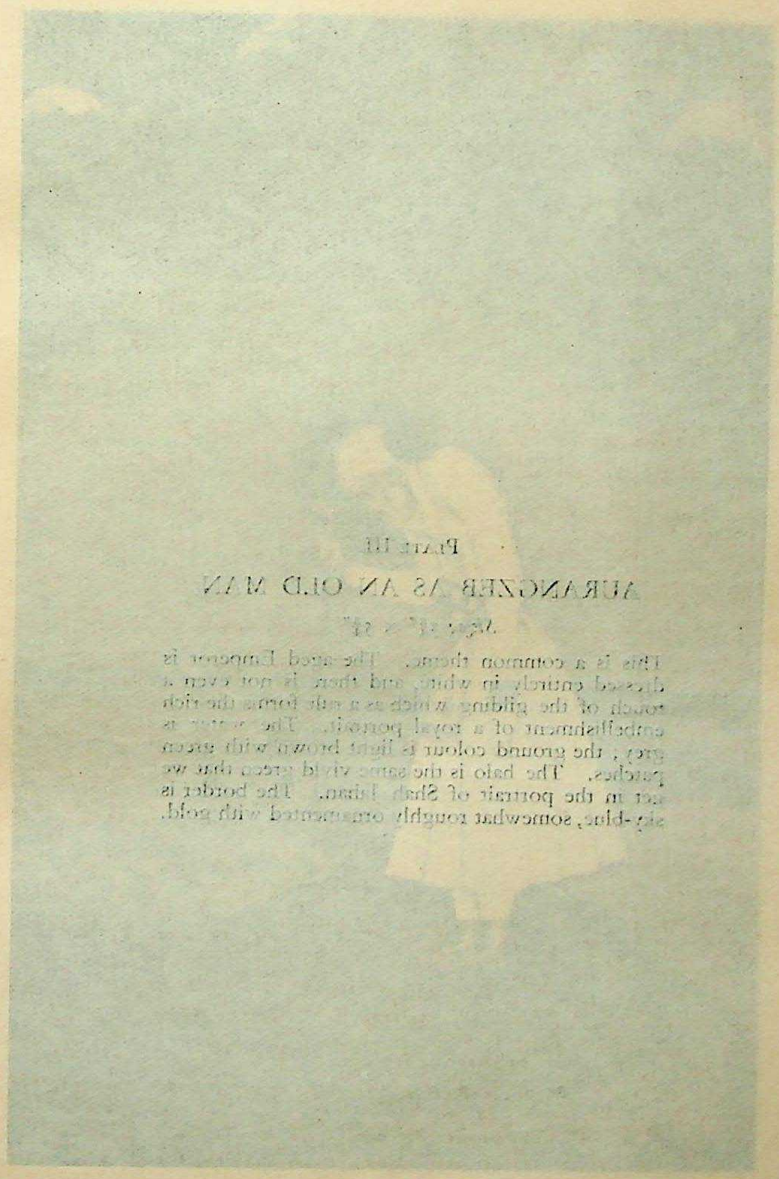

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PLATE III

AURANGZEB AS AN OLD MAN

Size: $3\frac{3}{4}'' \times 5\frac{3}{4}''$

This is a common theme. The aged Emperor is dressed entirely in white, and there is not even a touch of the gilding which as a rule forms the rich embellishment of a royal portrait. The water is grey; the ground colour is light brown with green patches. The halo is the same vivid green that we get in the portrait of Shah Jahan. The border is sky-blue, somewhat roughly ornamented with gold.

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PLATE III

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suggestion would be unfair. On the other hand, harm may be done by excessive eulogies of Mogul painting. The limitations of this art are very clearly defined. Stated most broadly they are simply those which miniature painting naturally imposes upon the artist. Within these restrictions, the Mogul artists were able to produce some of the loveliest miniatures that the world has ever seen. Mogul painting must always rank proudly in the comparative scales of the world's art. Its singularity of style, its originality, and its superb drawing, which some might urge as additional claims to eminence, are of course parts of the same claim. No one would think of comparing a miniature by Cosway, beautiful though it be, with a life-size portrait in oils by Velasquez. In surveying the vast range of Indian and Indo-Persian art it is better to admire, rather than to resort to facile comparisons. But this much may be said—that many can walk gratefully in the flowery meads of Mogul painting whose heads would tend to become dizzy among the altitudes of Buddhist art; just as many who admire the very human Madonnas of Murillo or Sassoferrato are repelled, rather than attracted, by the remote and superhuman qualities of those of Michaelangelo; or as, in Greek art, the sweetness of Praxiteles may charm, where the transcendent power of Phidias may overawe. We are not all born to mount to the foot of those pinnacles on which stand the very greatest of the world's artists in an isolation that is almost as terrible as it is sublime. Nor do all of us feel the desire to do so. True, there is the epic with all its sonorous cadences, its glowing imagery, its crowded fields of action; but fortunately there is also the sweetness of the lyric for the lulling of weary souls. And what the lyric did

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for the literature of Elizabethan England, Mogul painting may be said to have done for Indian art.

Our brief excursion into the 'realms of gold' would certainly be incomplete if it led us to the consideration of the past at the expense of the present. If we have read our histories of Mogul painting aright there will be encouragement in the mere perusal for all of us; and fuller assurance will be obtained when we survey the fields of contemporary talent in India, in the light of these oldtime researches. There is little practical use in studying any period of art unless with the object of applying the lessons we may learn from it. Even the general reader or art-lover will cull some lesson from an intelligent perusal of the methods which *made* Mogul painting. The student of Indian art, or the patriot anxious to witness its revival, will, however, desire to go further than this, and will not only inquire as to how the old artistic triumphs were won, but how they can be won again.

To make the attempt to rebuild the Taj *without* a Shah Jahan, or to rejuvenate Indian painting without the sensitive guidance of Jahangir, might at first blush appear as vain an ambition as to produce the play of *Hamlet* 'with the Prince of Denmark left out'. There *must* be patronage or there will not be art. And yet, we would fain cling to the belief that the brilliant artistic ability of Young India will ere long win that necessary patronage, which to the artist is no less vital than the sun to the flower! For if the patron has temporarily disappeared in India, the Indian artist remains; and if the steadily increasing study of India and her ancient art tends to direct towards this gifted and most interesting survival the sympathetic rays of public interest, then that study will have been worth while.

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COLOUR AND THE MOGULS

In the pleasant month of March the garden which environs Bombay's principal museum puts on its holiday clothes to welcome the curious stranger. As the visitor enters the gate and proceeds along the path, he will pass by brilliant beds of petunia, a medley of scarlet and purple, and will see across the palm-sprinkled garden, even brighter glimpses of phlox, pinks, and canna, enacting their drama of colour in the hot sunshine. After this the grey museum in the Bijapur style of architecture must seem less grey, and the entrance hall with the white Western statues less pallid.

The colours of the garden linger in the visitor's recollection until he has reached his objective, the Indian picture gallery upstairs. And here his eyes will meet the appeal of the paintings, and the sub-conscious transition between the flowers and these beautiful Indian pictures is natural. Outside the museum, he knows, the flowers are breathing their eternally fragrant message; inside the building he is met by the colourful work of artists who, hundreds of years ago, studied that message to some purpose.

Shakespeare tells us that it is the duty of the actor to hold the mirror up to Nature, and the Moguls proclaimed this similar mission of the sister art. The Mogul artist was a translator rather than an innovator, and converted the story of Nature into the *lingua franca* of pictures. So does every artist? or at least so every artist tries to do? True; but there are radical distinctions between the methods of different translators. The old picture-writing of the Aztecs and of the Egyptians tell their tale with different symbols.

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The visitor to the Prince of Wales Museum of Bombay, whose progress we have traced from the gate to the garden, and thence to the Indian galleries, now begins his promenade of the long corridor connecting the cabinets of Indian pictures, and while he does so may well fancy that he is in another garden surrounded by other flowers. As he walks among these pictures he may even sense their perfume!

For what wizardry of all the arts can surpass the magic of colour? What student of painting, however much he may acclaim the grand intellectual style of the Roman School, does not yield his soul's allegiance to the colour-spell of the Venetians? Who that is not destitute of the colour sense, does not respond to the rhapsodies of a Rubens and (while the spell is on him) snap his fingers at the classic coldness of a Raphael or a Bronzino? Colour is the child of art, but it is also the Master's master. It cannot be scientifically controlled by him like drawing, form, and chiaroscuro, but gambols on before the painter's vision, a smiling tormenting elf, luring the artist to pursue vainly, and, when he has almost caught it, leaping like a rainbow across impassable morasses, or glittering like the coral from beneath fathomless seas, or, like Sirius, sparkling in ever-changing mockery across the mighty gulf of space.

To the artist who has conquered some of nature's subtle secrets of line we may defer with all respect. To him who has succeeded in plucking a single feather from the plumes of the Colour-Elf we should bend in deepest reverence. The elusive sprite has appeared in many differing aspects to the world's artists. To some it has distinguished itself by its subtlety; to others by its purity; and to others again by its forceful brilliance. In the works of a Rembrandt, a Fra Angelico, and a Bihzad the profundity of the Dutch Master,

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PLATE IV

A FAIR LADY (Rajput School)

Size : 4" × 3"

The lady is shown on a balcony with a bright green lawn behind her which leaves a narrow strip of sky half an inch from the top of the picture. The flesh tones are a warm old ivory. The veil or small bodice, is of old gold. The skin is scarlet and mauve. The transparent veil which is draped over the head and shoulders and reappears under the left arm crossing the skin, has a gilt border, and is covered with gilt flowers. The bracelets, rings, and ear-rings are also gilded, and the finger tips reddened as with henna. This is not a first class example of Rajput painting, but the curious simplicity and decorative effectiveness of its arrangement and colour are charming and interesting.

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PLATE IV

A FAIR LADY (Rajput School)

Size : $5\frac{1}{4}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$

The lady is shown on a balcony with a bright green lawn behind her which leaves a narrow strip of sky half an inch from the top of the picture. The flesh tones are a warm old ivory. The *choli* or small bodice, is of old gold. The skirt is scarlet and mauve. The transparent veil which is draped over the head and shoulders and reappears under the left arm crossing the skirt, has a gilt border, and is covered with gilt flowers. The bracelets, rings, and ear-rings are also gilded, and the finger tips reddened as with henna. This is not a first class example of Rajput painting, but the extreme simplicity and decorative effectiveness of its arrangement and colour are charming and interesting.

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PLATE IV

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the ethereal tenderness of the Italian, the exquisite romance of the Persian are all feathers plucked from the wing of the same angel.

The visitor, whose steps we are unobtrusively following through the galleries of this Indian museum, may perhaps be reflecting somewhat on these lines, for he pauses in front of one of the Persian pictures—it may be that which illustrates Firdausi's epic, the *Shahnamah*, and depicts in radiant hues the doughty deeds of the great Rustam in the midst of fighting hosts.[1] No doubt the Western stranger is trying to 'fit' this piece, which is unique to him, into its proper place in his cosmic conceptions of art. He will not find that easy, however, all at once; for these delicious blues, reds, and yellows,—the absence of contrasted darks from the background, and the refinement and delicacy of the composition are almost as unlike the old Buddhist paintings of the Ajanta caves[2] as they are unlike the exhibition of the Dutch Masters at Burlington House.

Well—more roads than one may lead to Rome, and our visitor will admit to himself, as he at last moves onward, that henceforward his ideas of 'colour' must comprise this lovely discovery of oriental arabesque and simple patterned shape, as well as all the 'effects' of light, playing upon flesh or fabric, or landscape, that he had gleaned in the course of past years in the picture galleries of Europe. He may now, if he will, proceed to trace on the walls of these cabinets the gradual evolution of the Mogul painter's art —this rose-bush from a Persian garden transplanted to Indian soil.

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[1] Sir Ratan Tata Art Collection.

[2] Copies by Khan Bahadur Syed Ahmed, lent by Sir Akbar Hydari, are exhibited in this Museum.

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In the pictures of Akbar's school he will perceive the grafting of Indian shoots upon the old Persian stem, and in the later works of Jahangir's time the full blooming of another—this time a really Indian rose. But always as he moves from one picture to the other he sees colour; winsome, and winning him with smiles; forceful, commanding him with power; or serious, impressing him by dignity and strength. Gradually he grows to feel that this colour has a peculiar influence in addition to its natural charm for the eye. It generates an atmosphere about him. It can carry him on a flood of blue and silver back into a great era, an age that is lost.

Perhaps he recalls Matthew Arnold's vivid description:

> And on the other side the Persians form'd :
> First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
> The Ilyats of Khorassan : and behind,
> The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
> Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.

It seems to him that the painted warriors, with their long spears, seated on their richly caparisoned horses, are no longer unfamiliar. The portraits of the stout, cheerful-looking Indian monarchs and princes seem to bestow a regal greeting upon him, one by one. Beautiful ladies bending down the boughs of trees to pluck the *champak*, or dreaming over their flowers and birds, or listening to a tale of love, cease to be merely the illustrations of a Mogul fairy-tale.

Colour has created in him an ardent belief in the past, even converted the past into a greater and a much more beautiful reality than the present. He feels as though he also had been graciously admitted to look upon great oriental festivals, an honoured guest on occasions of high

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PLATE V

THE KING OF GOLCONDA

Size: 5″ × 8½″

The technique of this painting is interesting. Instead of the delicate outline of some of the other portraits, this portrait is drawn in the bolder convention of the Deccani (Western India) School. It is a vigorous study, full of life and character. The flesh tones, though pale, are warmly relieved against the delicate green which constitutes the background. The turban is red, with a band of jewels; the coat is solidly overlaid with gold adorned with dainty nosegays of purple and green. The fur collar is a deep umber, which shows up warmly in contrast to the blue-black beard. The tunic is white with gilt flowers, and the girdle ornamented with gold; the trousers are pale yellow with brown-madder stripes. The border is cobalt blue, and gold.

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PLATE V

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state. The stereotyped halls of the museum are dull no longer, for they are fragrant with musk and the rose petals on which, it seems, he is treading. The music of rhythm and colour has enveloped his soul.

The colour-spell of the Mogul and Persian artists can achieve something which all their marvellous line or brush-work may fail to perform; and when closing-time compels the visitor who has so long interested us, reluctantly to leave these colour-haunted halls, we, his unknown observers, whisper, as we too steal away, that India is the colour-box of the world.

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FOUR MOGUL PAINTINGS

The Mogul miniatures have their own wide circle of constant admirers; they must also endure their share of neglect from those for whom Mogul painting possesses little appeal. Their worst enemies however are to be found in the ranks of their admirers; for although imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery, the imitations of this school of painting have done more harm to the reputation of the Mogul school than its severest critics. Who that has lived for any length of time in India does not know only too well the vendor of bad 'Mogul' paintings? This gentleman is usually furnished with some introduction from a mutual acquaintance, and so has to be treated with all the respect due to an enemy armed with a dangerous weapon! It is no use telling him that we are busy, or that we are for the moment deficient in those auriferous, if mundane aids, without which the transfer of property—even such an aesthetic commodity as art—from one individual to another, is very apt to lag. If you tell the troublesome visitor, in your politest manner, that the pressure of immediate business unhappily renders an inspection of his valuable paintings (which he carries in a bulky parcel under his arm) impossible, he will only welcome this postponement as an earnest of the sincerity of your good intentions towards him, and will ask smilingly for the favour of an appointment at any time that suits your convenience, not his. If you lament that dearth of the needful which places you under the painful necessity of foregoing the pleasure of purchasing even the most tempting of his pictures, he will cheerfully tell you that he does not want you to *buy* anything at all; the utmost boon that he craves is that you should merely

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look at his wares, as though he really believed that you inherit the 'golden touch' of Midas and can convert his pictures into bullion by merely taking them in your hands! Besides, it is very hard to avoid that sneaking natural hope which lies deeper than the scepticism engendered by bitter experience, which leads you on to your favourite delusion (for are we not all said to be mad on some one point or other, if only people can find out which ?) that your visitor *may* turn out to be a genuine purveyor of art after all. It is only when you have yielded, and consented to see his 'Mogul' pictures ; when he has untied the cloth portfolio, and laid these sham treasures before you in their shameless effrontery (which, to do him justice, may have deceived their possessor himself) that hope dies within you, and you deal with the tiresome intruder—as best you can.

The Mogul paintings differ in one respect from other kinds of painting. They are generally seen in their extremes. They are usually either very good or desperately bad. India is strewn with inferior examples of 'Mogul' painting (so-called) as thickly as a certain nefarious path is paved with good intentions ! What wonder if frequent disappointment ends by irritating some into solemnly vowing that Mogul art is a fraud, or at least a mirage ? Where do all these miserable failures of pictures come from ? Who has multiplied these crudities, which parody a distinguished style and a famous school of painting more effectively than *Punch's* annual caricaturing of the pictures of the year at the Royal Academy ? The comfort is that the good pictures in the Academy's exhibition continue to shine in spite of the *Punch* artist's witty travesties of them, and that the Mogul masterpieces of painting remain, to restore confidence shaken by the cheap versions which ape them.

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For my present purpose, which is to reaffirm, illustrate and justify (by a reference to concrete examples), the excellence of Indian painting, I have selected more particularly four pictures, of which three are Mogul, while one is described as 'Indo-Persian'.[1] These have recently been added to the Indian Cabinets in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, having been purchased (with others) by the Trustees of the Museum from the well-known collection of the late Rao Bahadur D. B. Parasnis at Satara. These four pictures will be found to be veracious witnesses. The 'Indo-Persian' picture is the smallest member, as it is also the oldest, of this interesting quartette. The Parasnis Catalogue calls it 'The Oldest Delhi Miniature', but gives it no other title. The painting is only four inches in height and two in breadth. The incident depicted is thus described: 'The saint is riding a fierce lion. Before him is standing a person of middle age, wearing a rose-coloured coat and scarlet cap. A most beautiful mountain scenery (*sic*) is shown in the background.' The date is given as the early seventeenth century. The cap of the pedestrian (who is represented in an attitude of supplication) is not scarlet, but crimson. He has a skin over his shoulders, and a short pink tunic secured by a cord round the waist. The 'saint' whose brown beard contrasts with the grey hair of the other, wears a white turban, a coat of indigo blue embroidered with gold, and striped pyjamas. He holds a serpentine staff in one hand, which points towards the pilgrim. The 'lion' is no lion but a well-favoured handsomely drawn leopard. The landscape is a wilderness of piled-up hills, tumuli, and woods, and terminates within half an inch of the top of the picture in a series of distant wooded peaks

[1] All Mogul paintings of course may loosely be so described.

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PLATE VI

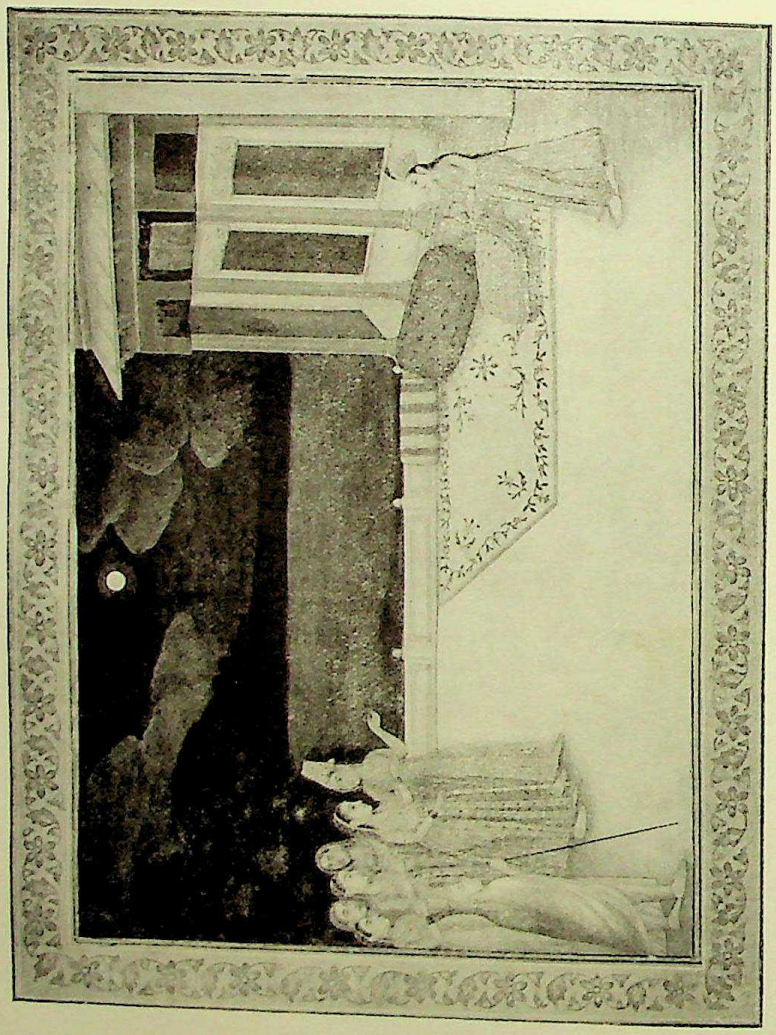

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PLATE VI

MOGUL PRINCESSES BY MOONLIGHT

Size: $6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 4\frac{3}{4}''$

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against a deep blue sky. In the middle distance is a lake with a hut (a hermitage perhaps) on the banks, and some half-effaced object in the water. The breadth of treatment in this picture is wonderful. In spite of its exceedingly small dimensions, the composition of the figures and landscape is easy and spacious; while there is nothing cramped or finnicky in the execution. The face of the 'saint', though comprised within one-eighth of an inch, is full of expression, a convincing portrait. There is a little shading on the leopard's head, back and legs, the outlines of the animal being so well managed that they convey a sense of softness which expresses the quality of fur. This treatment is also utilized in the leopard's skin suspended from the pilgrim's shoulders. The colouring of the landscape is very delicate and varied. The dark greens of the foliage are contrasted with the mauves and golden ochres of the rocks; the passages of green being subtly variegated, as though the artist had put forth his utmost skill in the delineation of these verdant contours. This painting makes one doubtful whether Mr Vincent Smith is altogether correct in his criticism that (to Indo-Persian artists) 'the scenery was of interest only in its relation to human beings as a background on which to exhibit the action of men and women.'[1]

In a different category of art, but hardly less beautiful, is the second of these pictures—'Mogul Princesses; a moonlight view.' The Parasnis Catalogue says, 'this is painted by Jahangir's famous artist, Manohar, and is superb on account of its delicacy and wonderful details. It is painted about 1605 A.D.' The date given is that of the year of Jahangir's accession.

[1] *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* (1911), page 496.

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This picture is an oblong, six and a half inches in length and five in height. Its subject is a group of women waiting expectantly on a terrace. The arrangement of the figures is of the simplest description, but very effective in design. There are six women on the left hand side of the picture, whose richly detailed robes are set off by the sad-coloured draperies of the old woman (a duenna apparently) who occupies the foreground, and might be compared to a sober grey moth keeping guard over a galaxy of brilliant butterflies. The whole central space of the composition is vacant, except for the carpet which extends from the sumptuous pavilion on the right, to near the centre of the terrace, and has obviously been spread out, with its cushions, for the reception of the expected visitor—no doubt a prince. Upon the wide vacant spaces of white marble, and the yellow carpet, a full moon is shining; its mellow light falls on a distant lake fringed with velvety trees, and bordered by hills. The isolated figure of a maid, carrying perfumes on a salver towards the ladies, is seen entering from the right hand side. The architectural features form a rectangle where the corner of the pavilion springs from the low balustrade of the terrace. The cold white of the empty foreground is somehow interesting,—due to the skill with which yellow, gold and crimson are introduced (as a relief) in the carpet, the cushions, and the rolled up *purdah* of the pavilion on the one side, and the gorgeous dresses of the ladies on the other. The artist has been much too clever to make one uncomfortably conscious of the mathematical spacing of this composition. Its apparently artless arrangement is in reality the result of very careful consideration. If we care to analyze the methods used in composing this beautiful scene,

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we shall find that the spaces between the horizontal and vertical divisions are skilfully planned; the distance from the top of the picture to the line of the horizon of the lake is roughly a third of the width of the whole subject. The fact that the outline of the distant hills is midway between the top of the picture and the balustrade is concealed, because of the subordination of its subtle values to the definite line of the water. There had to be bold arbitrary division of the nebulous night scene from the concrete realities of the building and the people, as befitted the decorative, rather than the realistic intention of the artist; so this separation is secured by the cutting edge of the balustrade which seems to (but does not) bisect the composition horizontally. The height from the finial of the balustrade to the cornice of the pavilion is precisely the same as that from the base of the picture to the base of the balustrade; the narrow dimensions of the latter, and the striped cushion, which only barely protrudes above it, preclude these similarities from becoming too evident. Again, the perspective of the carpet prevents its studied symmetry from provoking a comparison of its width with that of the lake; though the two measurements are identical. We have in this picture a lesson in the distribution of vertical and horizontal lines, and in 'camouflaging' the methods by which the result is obtained. This is not the art of a sentimentalist; and has little in common with the individualistic, emotional aspects of art in Europe in our own time. Yet this carefully constructed picture is full of charm.

The third of these paintings is the largest of the four which have been selected for examination. Its size is considerable for a Mogul painting—nearly thirteen inches in

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height and about eight and a quarter in breadth—with the addition of a decorative border exceeding half an inch in width. It delineates forty-nine persons. The Parasnis Catalogue gives the title of this piece as, 'Jahangir at Ajmere'; its date as early seventeenth century; and attributes it to Govardhan. It is a marvel of art and the best example I have seen of several similar subjects.[1]

This picture shows Jahangir seated beneath a splendid canopy surrounded by courtiers, to one of whom he is giving orders. Three religious sages are kneeling before him, 'perhaps reciting stanzas from the Koran'. Servants are distributing food to the poor who are seen crowding the foreground of the picture. The upper half of the composition is divided by the wall of a garden from the lower half. It contains a view of the shrine of the saint, Khwaja Mu'in-ud-din Chisti with devotees; while the battlements of the Fort of Taragad in the background are seen along the distant skyline. Jahangir and several of his courtiers are clothed in upper vests of transparent Dacca muslin—a fabric which, we are told, was of a woof so delicate that when floating on the surface of water, it became invisible. These principal figures are all magnificent examples of portraiture. They are drawn larger in size than the 'common herd' of mendicants and servants. The drawing and colouring of the picture are very good everywhere, and in some of the heads (always the strongest feature with the Mogul artists) rise to a level which could hardly be surpassed. If this seems very high praise, let the sceptic examine the head of Jahangir; of the man in the

[1] The Frontispiece in Mr Percy Brown's book *Indian Painting under the Mughals*, attributed to the same artist, is somewhat similar in arrangement but not equal in merit. Plate XX in the same volume shows the same view of the shrine of Khwaja Mu'in-ud-din Chishti, Ajmere, as appears in the above.

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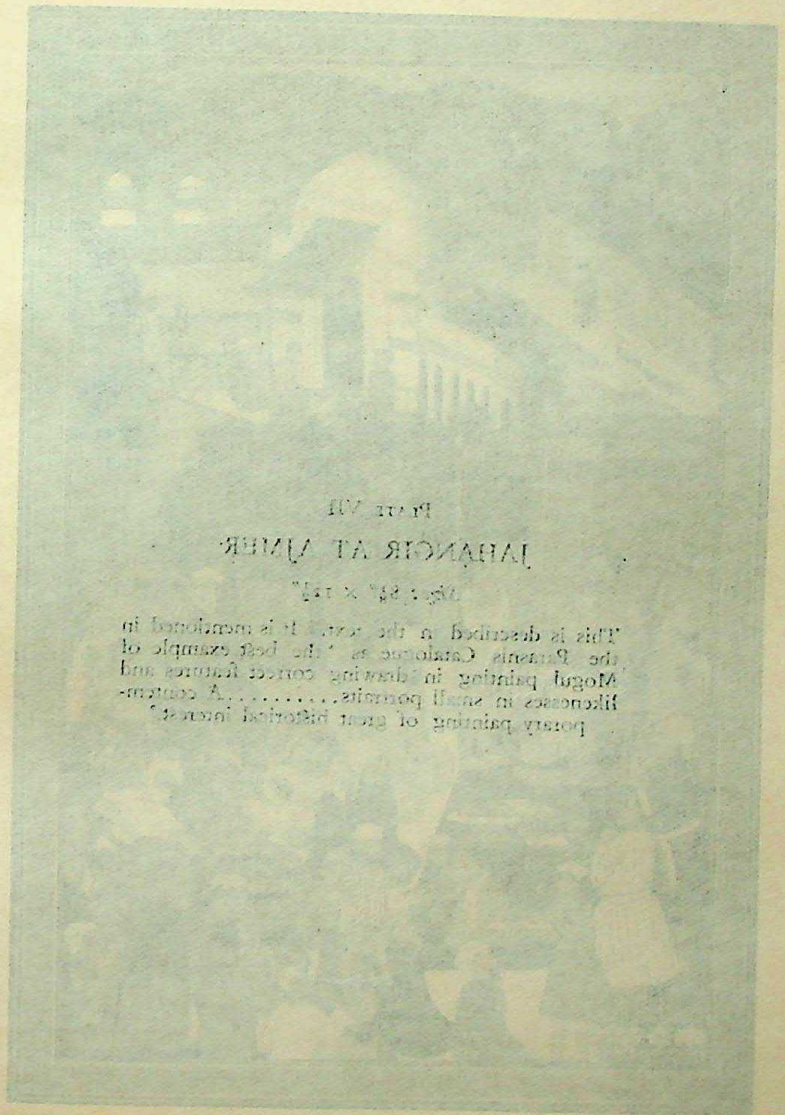

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PLATE VII

JAHANGIR AT AJMER

Size: $8\frac{1}{8}'' \times 12\frac{1}{2}''$

This is described in the text. It is mentioned in the Parasnis Catalogue as 'the best example of Mogul painting in drawing correct features and likenesses in small portraits.....A contemporary painting of great historical interest.'

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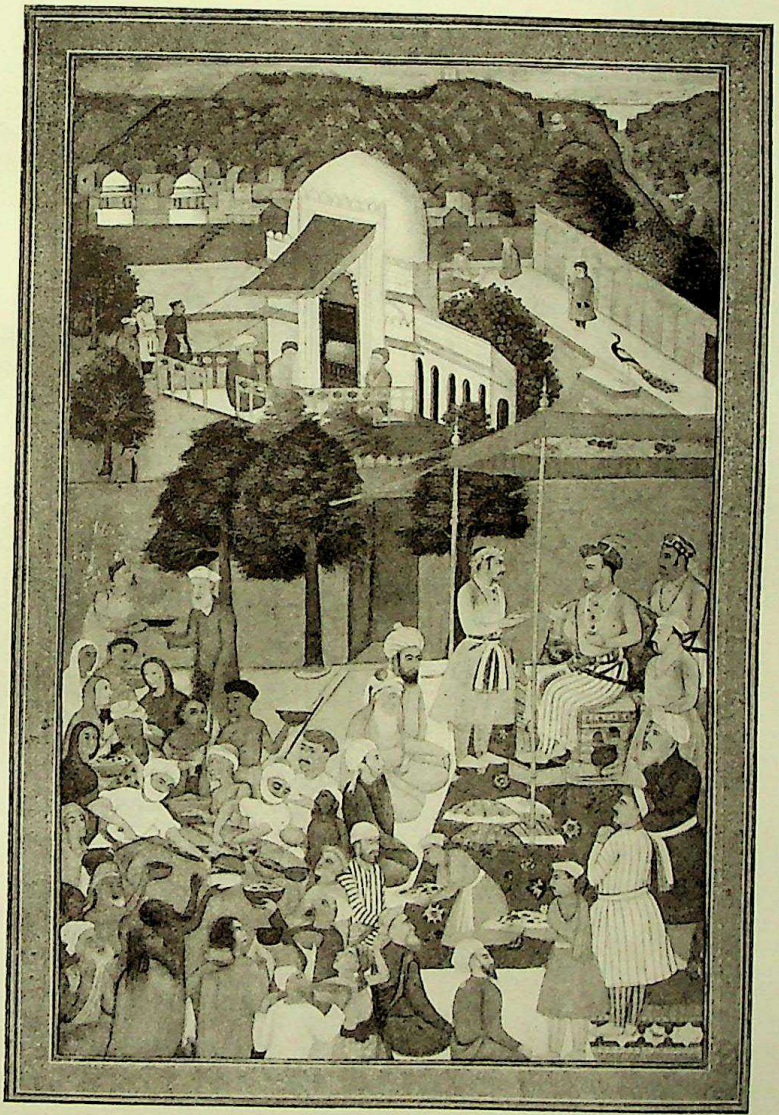
PLATE VII



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parti-coloured turban behind him; of the stout individual in the white turban on the Emperor's left hand; and the ancient, with flowing beard (the most wonderful of all) who forms the centre of the trio kneeling before the throne. On these, the artist has clearly lavished his utmost skill. The crowd massed triangularly across the left hand bottom corner of the composition is full of life and expectancy, but inferior in characterization. The distant landscape is conventionalized, and such perspective as exists in the upper half of the picture (for the lineal division between the two scenes is almost undisguised) is on a different plane to that of the lower half. These two sections are beautifully unified, however, by colour and tone, which are exquisite throughout. This is certainly one of the most memorable Mogul paintings I have seen, and goes far to explain and justify the eulogies which Jahangir is pleased to expend on some of his artists, in his delightful book of memoirs.

The last of these pictures represents a single figure. It is a portrait of Aurangzeb as a young man. Clad in a light flowered tunic with fur collar, over an under-garment of royal purple, which is shown at the breast, cuffs and skirt, he stands against a simple background of light jade green. He wears a crimson turban roped with pearls, and surmounted by an aigrette; the conventional halo surrounds his head, and he holds a small flower in one hand and a sword in the other. The drawing of the head and hands falls short of that profound research which delighted us in the previous picture, and convinced us of its absolute truth. But this portrait summarizes essentials, and ignores non-essentials, and the result is a very vital likeness. Its generalizations of drawing tend everywhere to strength, delicacy, and breadth. Here, one can easily sympathize with the enthusiasm of the

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Parasnis Catalogue, which describes this picture as 'a masterpiece of Mogul art, perhaps the most wonderful and life-like portrait of Aurangzeb in the world's collections'.

The four pictures, which have here been partially described, are accessible to all who may visit Bombay. But even without seeing the works themselves, it is hoped that the reader will be able to draw some conclusions from these slight descriptions. In the first place we should weigh the significance of the portraiture which is brilliantly demonstrated in these Indian paintings. Indian art then cannot be a purely philosophical or mystical affair, as one would imagine from the comments of critics on the subject. These pictures show that the Mogul artist learned the technique of his calling thoroughly, and studied at the feet of Nature. Another shrewd hint derived from these examples is, that the power of drawing from life is common both to East and West. So after all, we decide that there is no such thing as two different categories of drawing, namely, Indian and European; that there are only two sorts of drawing anywhere, good drawing and bad drawing; and that India's contributions to the former category are among the best of their kind.

We do not agree (after looking at these pictures) with a popular writer's dictum, 'Essentially the Indo-Persian drawings are a branch of Asiatic art to be judged by the canons of that art, and not according to standards fixed by the Renaissance Masters; or as a French critic expresses himself, "The student must throw over his artistic education, every critical tradition, and all the aesthetic baggage that has accumulated from the Renaissance to our own days".' These pictures prove the absurdity of such exaggeration. The same fundamental canons of art that are traceable in the

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pictures of Manohar and Govardhan, are also to be found in those of Gentile da Fabriano and Carpaccio. It is the original point of view in these Mogul pictures, genuinely Eastern in its decorative expression, which delights us; like the joyous ring of the precious metal which distinguishes the true coin from the false.

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JAHANGIR AND HIS ARTISTS

There are few more agreeable interludes in the biographies of great men of action than those passages in their lives which tell of their sympathies with art and artists. Such phases in the character of an Alexander, a Lorenzo, or a Napoleon seem to transfigure these great personalities and reveal the conqueror, statesman, and soldier in a milder light. Its humanizing power is perhaps art's most catholic characteristic. We turn from our contemplation of Alexander the tamer of the horse Bucephalus, the invincible leader of the Macedonian phalanx, and the unrestrained slayer of his best friend, to Alexander the man of taste, who chose that the beautiful Persian casket which had been brought to him from among the spoils of King Darius should be used as a receptacle for the Iliad of Homer, but for no lesser jewel. We dwell on the fact of Napoleon insisting on a masterpiece of painting forming a necessary feature in a treaty of Peace; and we resent being told by the iconoclasts that Leonardo da Vinci did not die in the arms of King Francis after all, and that Shah Jahan did not breathe his last while contemplating the distant Taj. We do not willingly consent to class as apocryphal these stories which seem of the essence of canonical truth; or those others of how Philip of Spain painted with his royal hand the badge of ennoblement across the breast of Velasquez's own portrait; how Charles V stooped to pick up the brush that Titian had let fall, and how he checked the murmurs of his courtiers with the reproof: 'I can create others like you, but I cannot create another Titian.'

'Consider the respect which must have been paid to great

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PLATE VIII

JAHANGIR AT AJMER

(*Detail*, Actual size)

This reproduction shows the Mogul portrait-painter's art at a very high level. It is convincing because of its close adherence to nature.

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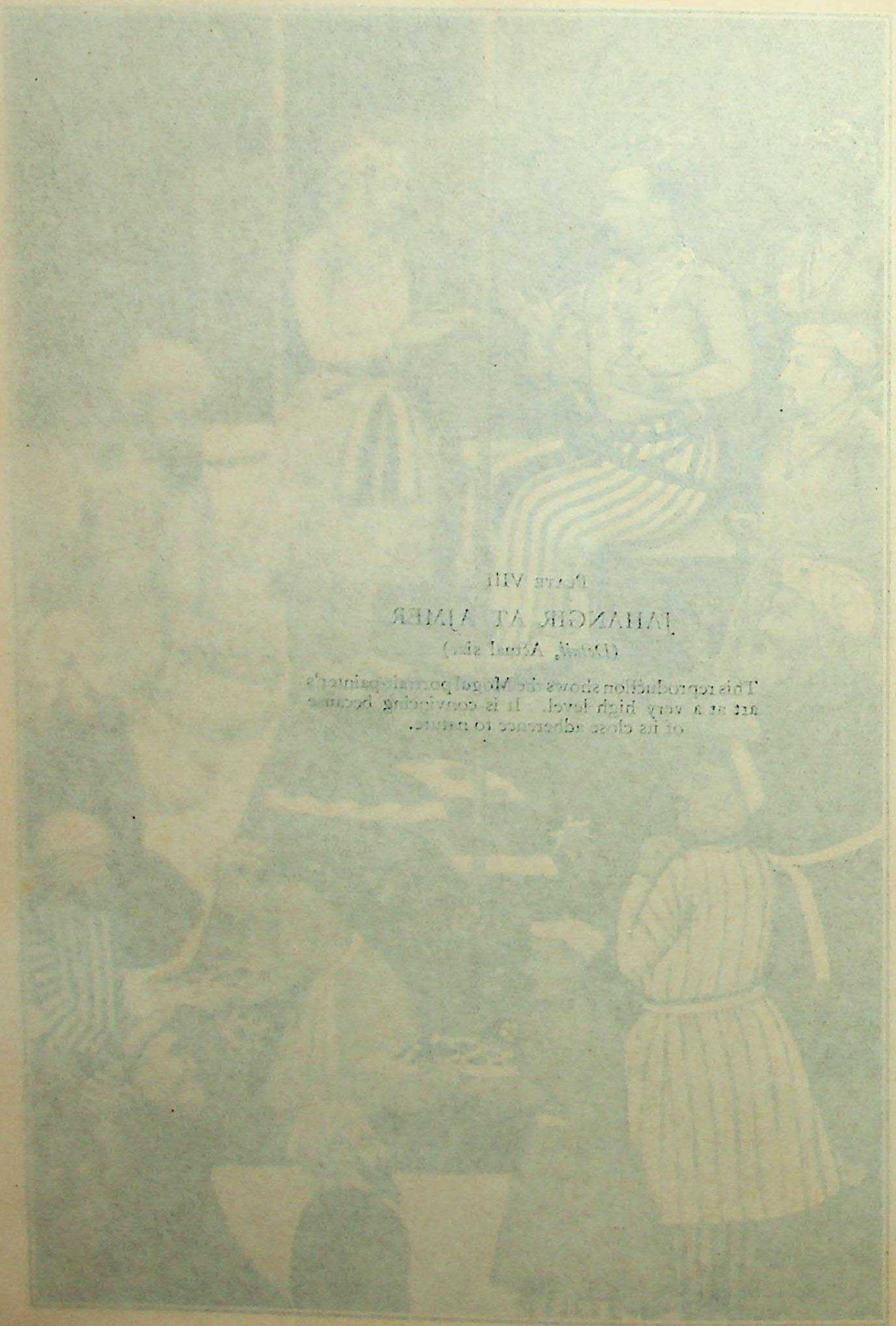

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Artists,' wrote one who admired the Ancients, 'when such a man as Socrates pronounced them the only wise men. Æsop took the greatest pleasure in lounging in their painting rooms; Marcus Aurelius took lessons in philosophy from an artist, and always said that the latter first taught him to distinguish the true from the false; and when Paulus Æmilius sent to the Athenians for one of their ablest philosophers to educate his children, they selected Metrodorus, the painter, and, let it be remembered, that amongst the children placed under *his* care was one of the Scipios. What must have been the effect on the rising youth of Greece when the Amphictyonic Council decreed that Polygnotus, their greatest monumental painter, should be maintained at the public expense wherever he went, as a mark of the national admiration for his greatest work, the Hall at Delphi?'

Tempora mutantur! Europe can at any rate point proudly to the art patronage of the past—can heave a sigh of retrospection still audible, even amidst the whirr of her flying men and the roar of her multitudinous machinery. India can equal if not surpass the record.

Indeed the vital spark of patronage glowed brightly for so long in India as almost to lead one to believe that its present eclipse cannot signify extinction; that the flame still burns somewhere or other, to blaze abroad again in its due time, as the opening of the grave of a Rosicrucian was said to reveal within it the ever-burning lamp of the long-buried magician.

To attempt to parallel a Lorenzo with a Jahangir, or a Julius II with a Shah Jahan would be more ingenious than instructive; for, of course, all great patrons of art the world over have come of a common origin. Like the Montresors

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in Edgar Poe's story they are 'a great and numerous family', and the noble family traits are unmistakeable. The true scion of this world-wide family has always been distinguished from the connoisseur and the virtuoso by breadth of vision, and courage. The connoisseur may boast of his Mogul paintings, his old prints, his blue-and-white china, his 'Old Masters'; but rarely indeed does he show the courage to buy, from unknown artists, work whose value has not been stabilized by Time and the dealers. He prides himself—not upon his patronage of artists—but upon his acquisitive capacities; he will talk of his love for a portrait by Titian, which he has cleverly obtained at a low price from an impoverished owner, or perhaps one who did not understand its value; will tell us how he has come to regard this picture as quite indispensable, and how a sight of it at least once a day has become an essential indulgence for his aesthetic cravings. And the plain man believes in his vehemence and cannot but draw a comparison between this gifted being, endowed with such super-sensitive appreciation for the Beautiful, and his mundane self; until one day he reads in his daily paper that his fastidious friend has sold his Titian for the 'nominal sum' of thirty thousand pounds!

The business of the art patron on the other hand is the very reverse of this glorified picture-dealer's. His business is not to sell, but to buy. He is always generous; frequently absurdly generous. He is sometimes taken in, but still follows the lure of art, and does not care two pins about the commercial value of the style of a picture which he fancies. His idea is to give many artists a chance. We know that Plutarch is wrong when he says that Alexander refused to have his portrait made by any other sculptor than Lysippus, not because of the arguments advanced against this statement

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by the commentators, but simply because Alexander indubitably belonged to the 'great and numerous family' of the Art Patrons, and such exclusiveness is at variance with the family traits. Your true Art Patron is not afraid of making mistakes.

The pages of that enthralling book, the *Memoirs* of the Emperor Jahangir, abound in interesting indications of the actions and opinions of a great patron of art. A modern historian—Mr Vincent Smith—has well observed 'Art really interested Jahangir. His book is full of references to the subject, which it would be desirable to collect and discuss'. His love of nature has been cited as Jahangir's most pleasing characteristic, but it did not stop with his descriptions in poetry and poetic prose; he loved the graphic delineation also.

Very early in the *Memoirs*[1] the sculptors come into the picture. 'In this place had been erected by my order a *mandor* at the head of a grave of an antelope called Mansaraj . . . on account of the rare quality of this antelope, I commanded that no person should hunt the deer of this plain, . . . They made the gravestone in the shape of an antelope.' When encamped at Basawal his artistic eye detects an even more novel possibility: 'A white rock was present in the river bed. I ordered them to carve it in the form of an elephant.'

On the Imperial journeys the artists are an integral unit of the sovereign's escort, and at all times and seasons he calls upon their services.

Thus at another halt they brought Jahangir—who was an

[1] For all the extracts from Jahangir's *Memoirs* in this article I am indebted to the translation of Messrs Rogers and Beveridge.

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ardent naturalist—'a piebald animal like the flying mouse, which in the Hindi tongue they call *galahri* (squirrel), and said that mice would not frequent any house in which this animal was . . . as I had never seen one before, I ordered my painters to draw a likeness of it'. The Emperor was no stickler for the academic forms of beauty in the models he chose to set before his artists.

Indeed in the following incident one might discover a pre-futuristic symptom of the cult of ugliness—Europe's modern fetish!

When a dervish from Ceylon had brought him 'a strange animal', whose 'face was exactly like a large bat, and whose whole shape was like that of a monkey, but it had no tail', he explains that, 'as the creature appeared very strange, I ordered the artists to take a likeness of it in various kinds of movement. It looked very ugly'.

Jahangir was not unaware of the limitations of the art of the period as well as of its possibilities. After describing with the keen interest of a naturalist a pair of pet kids—('their liveliness and laughable ways, and their manner of gambolling and leaping'), he adds the observation that, 'it is notorious that painters cannot draw properly the motions of a kid. Granting that they may chance to draw the movements of an ordinary kid after a fashion, they certainly would have to acknowledge themselves at a loss how to draw the motions of these kids.' The Grand Mogul could become eloquent over the merits of a picture; a work containing 240 figures by Khalil Mirza Shahruki, which was given to him as a present, caused him exquisite delight.

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PLATE IX

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PLATE IX

BLACK BUCK AND DOE

Size : $10\frac{1}{4}'' \times 7\frac{1}{4}''$

A bold and characteristic example of animal portraiture. The local colour of the animals is simply but truthfully rendered in flat washes. The background is a uniform pale green with a touch of blue at the top of the picture. The border to right and left is dull cobalt blue, with a conventional design in gold. The black buck's method of tilting its head in the air is thoroughly characteristic, while the habit of these animals of continually twitching their tails has also been recorded by the artist.

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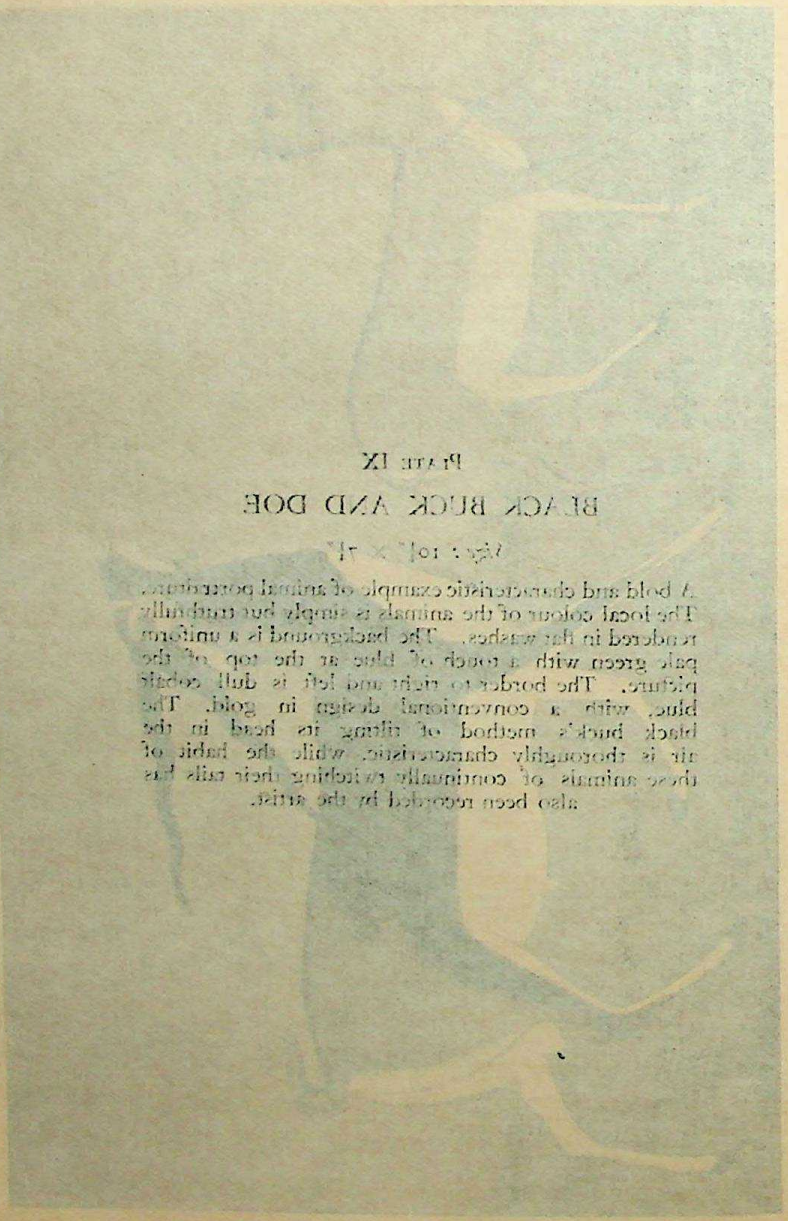

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Jahangir was an all-round patron and art critic, and there are ample evidences in his *Memoirs*, of his gift of *thinking* pictorially. Not only is this faculty revealed in his brilliant scenic descriptions of Kashmir, and innumerable beauty-spots of India, but it crops up repeatedly in instances as charming as they are unexpected. At one time he saw a wild ass 'exceedingly strange' in appearance, which he fully describes, concluding: 'round the eyes there was an exceedingly fine black line. One might say the painter of fate, with a strange brush, had left it on the page of the world.'

Himself an enthusiastic gardener, he could not have failed to appreciate the artistic value of flowers, and narrates how one of his artists had painted more than a hundred of the different varieties of the wonderful flora of Kashmir. The wide scope of Jahangir's interest in art makes it probable that there is little exaggeration in the well-known stories of his eagerness for examples of European painting wherever he could obtain these; and we can readily understand the often quoted accounts of Sir Thomas Roe, the British Ambassador, and of the Jesuit Fathers.

All art interested Jahangir, and all artists were naturally *proteges* of this illustrious member of 'the great and numerous family'.

What could be more illuminating, what possible labour of historical research could better explain the flourishing condition of Indian painting during the best Mogul period, than the following passage, in which the liberal and living spirit of encouragement seems to permeate every line?

'Abu-l-Hasan the painter,' writes Jahangir, 'who has been honoured with the title of Nadiru-z-zaman, drew the

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picture of my accession as the frontispiece of the *Jahangir-nama* and brought it to me. As it was worthy of all praise, he received endless favours. His work was perfect, and his picture is one of the *chefs d'œuvre* of the age. At the present time he has no rival or equal. If at this day the masters Abdu'l-Hayy, and Bihzad were alive, they would have done him justice. . . .

'From his earliest years up to the present time I have always looked after him, till his art has arrived at this rank. Truly he has become Nadira-i-zaman (wonder of the age)!' There follows the celebrated passage in which Jahangir explains, and glories in his own understanding of the art—a passage which can well bear repetition: 'My liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such a point that when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or of those of the present day, without the names being told me, I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each of them. If any other person has put in the eye and eyebrow of a face, I can perceive whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eyebrow.' The man of affairs may only see in the artistic pride of the mighty ruler of Hindustan something as incongruous as the gesture of the Emperor Charles when he stooped to pick up Titian's brush. For the genuine patron, however eminent, is scarcely better understood by the world at large than the artist; and because he feels this, he is fain to make common cause with the latter. The sympathetic bond, which has in all times united artist and patron, is not the least strong of human ties. For if the patron has often to pay a price for

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the sake of art,[1] not by any means comprised within the limits of pounds, shillings, and pence, art must inevitably repay its full quota in the scheme of mutual interdependence. Patronage in not an attitude but a passion; and those who try to *assume* the ingratiating role of art's champion, cut as sorry a figure as the jackdaw strutting in peacocks' feathers. The patron is the natural centre of Nature's scheme of artistic creation; a recurring phenomenon, always inexplicable but always effective. He is the heart of the other solar system of *human* lights which can only endow the world with their brilliance while he continues to shine upon them. During periods of eclipse, when he has sunk in temporary extinction, art has sadly re-echoed the cry of Timon of Athens,—how that he had changed

> As the moon does, by wanting light to give:
> But then renew I could not like the moon;
> There were no suns to borrow of.

[1] None of the Grand Moguls has been more misunderstood or criticized by modern commentators than Jahangir; whether in the matter of underrating his talents, exaggerating his occasional cruelty (which was simply that of his period) or belittling his love of art. Mr Laurence Binyon in *Court Painters of the Grand Moguls* appears to be once more at sea when he thus summarizes: 'He was the type of rich collector perennial through the ages: pleased above all with fine workmanship, voluptuously appreciative of it, and having the sense of possession exquisite in the finger-tips. He would give enormous prices. . . .We get illuminating glimpses of Jahangir as a patron and critic of art in the pages of our own ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe. A vein of childish vanity and caprice, sometimes found in men of mediocre intellect placed in positions of immense power, is obvious in Akbar's unworthy son,' etc. It is far from obvious to me. But if Sir Thomas Roe's account *had* conveyed that impression I should want to ask for proof that 'our own ambassador' was a competent judge either of art, or of art patrons before believing it. Jahangir appears, from the account of 'our own ambassador', as a monarch whom he thought somewhat remarkable because he was able to get excited about art,—a natural enough view for an Englishman of any period. Mr Binyon is apparently much impressed with Jahangir's 'enormous prices'; but Jahangir was thinking of rewards and incentives, not market values; his connoisseurship was of the *constructive* sort which is so rare, not merely the *retrospective* kind which is characteristic of the typical rich collector.

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Such great patrons as Jahangir—for by virtue of the aspects of his character which have here been glanced at Jahangir *was* a great patron—are vicarious progenitors of genius. It was scarcely less enviable to have been *in loco parentis* to such as Abu'l-Hasan, and Mansur, than it was to have executed their paintings under a vivifying influence.

> Our little systems have their day,
> They have their day and cease to be,

says Tennyson; but no system has yet been devised by men to replace the celestial system of the patron and the artists! True, the passing of the princely props of culture has forced modern man to cudgel his brains to find substitutes. But the academies of Europe with their stereotyped patronage cannot fill the individual's place, and the Government can only encourage art effectively when it is moved by the patron's magnetic touch.

With Jahangir's advent the Hour and the Man had come once more for Indian painting; and at his passing, there passed with him one of the brightest phases of Mogul Art.

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PERSPECTIVE AND THE MOGULS

The Primitive prefers reality to the appearance of reality. Rather than resign himself to the malformations of perspective which do not interest his virgin eye he conforms the image of things to the notion of them which he has.

MAURICE DENIS

The artist is in a double relation with nature: he is at once her master and her slave. He is her slave in this sense, that he has to act through earthly means to make himself understood; he is her master in this sense, that he subdues these earthly means and makes them serve his high intentions.

GOETHE

I

It is queer how differently a picture may impress one on different occasions. We may come to admire a picture which we used to deride—and acquire a taste for a style which was anathema to us once upon a time, and this without snobbish subservience to the opinions of our highbrow critics. Mark Twain has somewhere written of an instance of this—a case of two young Americans who went to Paris in order to acquire the 'seeing eye'. After many months studying art—and this and that style—they were getting hopeless of acquiring the taste that betokens the true aesthete. However they paid a disconsolate visit to the Louvre one day, and to their astonishment were captivated by Leonardo's 'Mona Lisa' which when they first saw it had seemed to them extremely ugly. The moment of realization that 'Mona Lisa' was beautiful assured them that their mission in Europe had been accomplished; they understood that

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they had actually got the 'seeing eye': and they started homewards at once.

The question of appreciation of art is largely a question of perspective. The science of perspective is a comparatively modern fetish;[1] the denial of it is the still more modern and inevitable corollary, for of course the times must have their critics, and ours is a negative age. That chatty commentator on the Renaissance, Vasari, was quite as excited over Paolo Uccello's 'discovery' of perspective as we could possibly be over our modern repudiation of it.

Now in a manner of speaking there is no such thing as perspective; Paolo Uccello's much advertised 'discovery' was a compromise; and perspective can always be 'cooked' in a picture, as every art student knows. Some seeker after truth is said to have discovered to his horror that there were no fewer than three points of sight in Rubens' 'Rape of the Sabines', forgetting that it would not matter in the least if there were twenty. Accuracy, that is the accuracy of ascertained things, is the easiest and least interesting acquirement in art. It is the sheet-anchor of the mathematician, the photographer, and the criminal court witness; but the artist whose work is described as accurate, is almost as hopeless a case as the artist who is commended for the neatness of his painting. The gift of imagination includes as much accuracy as is requisite in art, as the greater includes the less. But then one cannot learn to be imaginative; nor should perspective be restricted to its linear manifestations only.

The Mogul painters made a very partial use of linear perspective; and their patriotic imitators today have been

[1] The pillared thrones in the Ajanta paintings are in perspective, however, and antedated Paolo Uccello's 'discovery' by many centuries.

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known to draw incorrectly on purpose. One may smile to see the careful manipulation of the top of a turret until it suggests the topsy-turvy vision of a sea-sick passenger on board ship,—for this is not Indian art, but the mere aping of the past, and such mannerisms are as easy as they are futile. The absence of the laws of linear perspective from the work of some modern Indian artists, can only be studied affectation; but certainly indicates their genuine lack of perspective in its widest sense.

II

It has been said that 'linear perspective is a study that deals with the appearance of objects as regards their size and the direction of their lines seen at varying distances and from any point of view'. Now, although the Mogul painter did not worry much about this science of linear perspective, and consequently did not always draw the appearance of objects as they should have looked from the casual spectator's station-point, yet he had, being an artist, a very definite feeling for perspective. That is to say he presented his subject in the right way, provided we accept his station-point for our own point of view. The primitive form of art was the two-dimensional picture, and the discovery in Europe of the third dimension in painting gave us what is still usually understood as Art, in Europe. And yet since the era of poor Paolo Uccello, how many artists have tried to return to the simple grandeur of the two-dimensional picture! Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Beatrice d'Este is a beautiful example, out of many. Whistler's portraits of his Mother, and of Thomas Carlyle, and indeed his best works are remarkable for this simple

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acceptance of the Oriental theory of two dimensions, even though not always restricted to representing the profile only. The moment you get depth or perspective in a picture you bring into play a whole host of new possibilities, but also new difficulties.

The Mogul artist represented his subject with a careful eye to its effectiveness, and his preference for portraits in profile was not because he could not draw his sitter from a three-quarter view. In a well-known picture (which has previously been discussed by me), that representing Jahangir at Ajmere,[1]—the monarch is shown (as usual) in profile, and so are the courtiers behind him; but the units of the crowd in the foreground are drawn in three-quarter and full view, easily. Probably the artist could refresh his memory by direct reference to his humble models, whereas his august sitters (if indeed the Emperor and his suite *often* sat for their pictures) had to be drawn in an aspect that, with the minimum of subtleties, gave the maximum of effect. The royal features thus tended to become a convention, like the King's head on a stamp or a coin, although, of course, the manner of treatment varied according to the skill of the artist. In the finest two-dimensional paintings by Mogul or Rajput artists the perspective is felt rather than drawn. In two instances of this, both depicting maidens upon a terrace among flowers, the point of sight is placed as low as the base line on which the women stand; yet the empty spaces washed with sunset or with cerulean tints, seem high and distant; and though in both these paintings the figures, flowers, and trees are all seen in a simplified silhouette one does not feel conscious of any absence of depth in these pictures, or of substance in the exquisite forms.

[1] See 'Four Mogul Paintings'.

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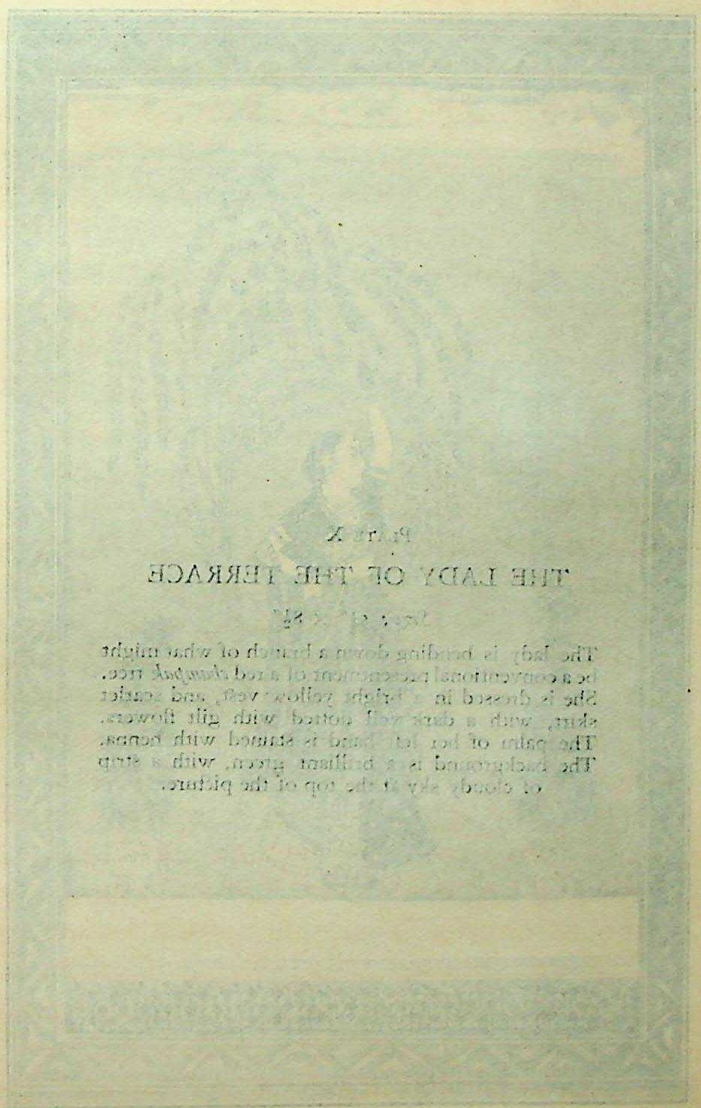

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PLATE X

THE LADY OF THE TERRACE

Size: $5\frac{1}{4}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$

The lady is bending down a branch of what might be a conventional presentment of a red *champak* tree. She is dressed in a bright yellow vest, and scarlet skirt, with a dark veil dotted with gilt flowers. The palm of her left hand is stained with henna. The background is a brilliant green, with a strip of cloudy sky at the top of the picture.

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PLATE X

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III

When viewing the subject of Mogul painting we should remember that we are viewing something in perspective,—down the long retrospect of three centuries, in fact. This must never be forgotten, for no nation's art has maintained an equipoise for hundreds of years; it must either advance or decline. The admirers of Mogul painting who think that by adopting its limitations they can recapture the soul of Indian art, are pursuing a chimera, as their work always shows. The modern Indian artist, like a strong swimmer, must trust himself boldly to the open sea; he cannot cling for support to the lifebuoy of a successful past convention, or he will effect nothing. For when we place this subject in its true perspective we have to reconstruct an environment very different to anything that exists today,—an environment of colours, designs, and pageantry. That has gone, but the pictures will speak and tell us about themselves. May not this Princess with her languid airs and graces, surrounded by ladies, be more than merely the somewhat flat rendering of a highly artificial school of painting? May we not appreciate the somewhat stiff and stilted piece—investing it with depths of life, and colour, and romance? May it not tell us its story? We shall cease to criticize, and to analyze; we shall place the picture in the right perspective in our minds, recall the glowing period of Aurangzeb, and let the picture speak. . . .

It was under a canopy of purple velvet embroidered with pearls and diamonds, and enriched with hanging pomegranates of solid gold that the Princess (the sister of the Emperor) received her guests. An embossed bowl stood on a tripod beside her, from which she spangled the ladies as they approached with silver stars, and gold dust, that

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sparkled with exceeding lustre in the blue-black tresses of the Timourian princesses. The coverings of the cushions on which they seated themselves had come from the looms of Samarcand, and the carpet spread before them was a rare piece from Ispahan. On its rich piled surface were placed in succession a hundred and one dishes of rarest porcelain. They sipped their *sherbat* from jade goblets; strains of hidden music pulsated in the air; young girls waved feathered *punkhas*, or went to and fro sprinkling the room with rose-water and the costly perfumes of Arabia.

In all India there was no more excellent hostess than the Emperor's sister. As became a great lady she did not disdain to attend in person to the wants of her guests. They broke the viands into fragments which they dipped into the silver cups and conveyed to their lips. This was simpler and prettier than using forks and spoons. Throughout the meal the artless fingers of the guests supplied the place of our complicated Western contrivances, and to watch their dexterity was to realize at once what real princesses these were! In eating they used the right hand; in drinking, the left, taking great care not to soil their fingers above the first joint, which would have shown a want of breeding; and from childhood they had been taught the advantage of keeping their fingers close together so that nothing might fall from between them; for such carelessness might reveal to the vigilant glance of a coldly critical mother-in-law, a spendthrift nature, and bring down a severe rebuke on the head of the offender. They were careful too, that the dainty finger-tips should never aspire to actual contact with their lips; their hands (some of them tattooed with tiny azure stars) were as fair and fragile as the lotus petals that glimmer on the Dahl lake. When dessert came at last,

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peeled and bisected, no one thought of appropriating more than a single morsel; to seize upon a whole orange would have been deemed unbecoming.

The hostess did not herself carry, from guest to guest, the finger bowl of honour, but conducted them to the golden cisterns which were ranged in tiers upon a huge table of black marble. The ladies drew the water by means of little taps, and washed their hands in the silver ewers that caught it as it fell; after which ceremony they followed their hostess with matchless grace as she led the way to the sumptuous withdrawing room. Her hospitable actions were by no means over yet. As they reclined on the gold-brocaded cushions, the important process of garlanding was carried out, the Princess selecting the wreaths from baskets carried by two young girls (her near relations) and bestowing upon every guest a necklet and wristlet of roses and jasmine. And now, like the ripple of the homing tide, conversation, which had been sparing during the banquet, began; and the small talk which would have been out of place before, was indulged in, punctuated by peals of ringing laughter, and swelling quickly into the chatter of a score of eager tongues all set free at once. Full justice was done to the newest topics of the court,—the latest wedding, the jewels worn by the bride, the most recent dacoity, the arrival of a cunning pedlar from Arabia with expensive silks,—all had their turn, while the hostess, carrying an *attar-dan* of gold garnished with minute bells, and crowned by a peacock with emerald eyes, went round, perfuming the ladies with the delightful essence of the *kus-kus*. She accomplished this by raising the peacock lid, inserting a little gilded stick into the narrow mouth of the receptacle, and touching with it each jewelled wrist as it was lifted by its lovely owner. At last, ushered

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by their grim-looking African guardians, or by servants reared in the family whose fealty could not be doubted and whose personal service was looked on as a concession to necessity, the ladies (having resumed their veils) were escorted through wide halls and winding corridors to the entrance of the Palace, where retainers, with blazing torches and flashing scimitars, guarded the curtained litters that were to carry them to their respective palaces. They had each been presented before parting with a pearl, and a packet of myrrh and *pot-pourri*, and had salaamed to the very earth before the Sister of the Emperor, on receiving the gifts.

She, however, when the last of the guests had gone, instead of at once seeking the rest to which her hospitable labours had entitled her, passed through the arched window of her room to a little balcony which overhung her own Rose Garden. The moon was still powerful, and outlined with its beams, as with the point of a phosphorescent brush, her tall and graceful form as she leant upon the white marble balustrade and looked down into the fragrant chasm. From within the room the multicoloured rays of a gorgeous hanging lamp reached to where she stood, painting her cheek and the hand which pressed it with tints of ruby and lapis lazuli. The glance of the Princess wandered from the garden to the jasmine creeper that clambered upwards until it seemed to stretch its delicate tendrils like clinging fingers trying to clutch the casement ledge. Had her thoughts any link with the song which a slave girl, gliding silently to the open lattice, had begun to intone rather than sing, as though accustomed to do so without waiting for the order of her mistress, tuning the strings of the *vina* to the haunting Mogul air ?... So the night waned, until the roaming stars slid from the awakening river back to their posts in the heavens.

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PLATE XI

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Size: 4" × 7"

The colour scheme of this beautiful composition approximates to the definite and bold use of the primaries, not altogether unlike the School of Akbar, though it has a completeness of finish, and delicacy of colour and execution which is still more reminiscent of the best Rajput methods. The cushion against which the princess leans is of turquoise blue and scarlet, and the two cushions behind her knee are of similar colours; while the delicately decorated carpet is a pale canary yellow. The princess is clothed in soft shades of old gold and pale heliotrope, with gilt ornaments. The sky is purple; the wall of the courtyard mauve, with a blue and gold doorway; the vigorous scarlets are repeated in the carpet in the background, and in the rolled-up bedding above.

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PLATE XI

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Size: $4\frac{3}{4}'' \times 7\frac{3}{4}''$

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PLATE XI

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UDAIPUR

From the Artist's Viewpoint

It is no serious indictment of the artist's way of looking at things to say that he is chiefly concerned with external manifestations. Unlike the historian, the poet, or the architect, he is content to accept the visual impression of concrete facts without question. What happens when he does not, is demonstrated by the host of ultra-modern distortions which are presumed to reflect the painter's emotions or psychic impressions. Every profession has its limitations, and painting must accept those restrictions which working in only two dimensions upon a flat surface entail upon the delineator of Nature. When it comes to expressing one's mental reactions, the artist is advised to hand on the torch to the scientist. For the strength of the artist's position really lies in its limitations. He at least should be able to 'view life steadily and view it whole' as a picture of infinite detail, every part of which, however small or humble, goes to make up the transcendent effect of one unified and prodigious work of art. And in this conviction he can honestly copy his own small portion of the universal masterpiece, and leave it to those greater than himself to portray in their turn more elaborate passages of the inexhaustible original. The architect's business is to probe into the reasons of things, before he can begin to build; and probably his pleasure in studying a fine monument of the past is tempered, to some extent at least, by reflections on the sordid requirements of his own time and the difficulty of repeating, in this business age, the triumphs of the Old Masters. To rear an edifice as graceful and impressive as

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the Acropolis, only adding thereto a complete system of drainage, electric light, and all the paraphernalia required by the troublesome modern habits of hygiene, and herding people together, would seem to some of us to be an insoluble problem. Luckily for the painter he is above trumpery considerations of practical utility. All he has to do is to make a picture; and on those rare occasions when he finds his picture all readymade for him, as it were, he accepts the find gratefully, and without learned research into the departments of history, health, or hustle. In this simple code of procedure he has the advantage of the poet, who must trim the glowing images of his imagination according to standards fixed not by Nature but by mutable man. So in attempting some descriptions of the beautiful city of Udaipur, I make no critical claims, my humbler purpose being but to indicate and to praise.

Udaipur has been likened to 'The Elfin Court of Dreamland'. So much may be derived from the official Railway guide; which also notices this city under the heading of 'The Venice of India' and (in moments of lesser enthusiasm) as 'Udaipur the Coy', 'dazzlingly decorative', or 'the fairest city in the world'.

Recollecting that somewhat similar phrases were long since applied to 'the White City' at Earl's Court (of trivial memory) one may prefer to reserve one's judgment, until the Promised Land is reached. And having arrived at Udaipur, the first thing that people of the most unexceptionable literary taste will be inclined to do is to grant the writer of the official guide-book a full indulgence for his flowery language; the next will be to protest that it is not flowery enough! I do not know whether the old adage that 'circumstances alter cases', may be stretched so as

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to include the intrusion of copious superlatives in reference to Udaipur, which would certainly not be tolerated by stylists in any other connexion! There are times, not many perhaps—but there *are* times—when restrained language becomes odious, if not disingenuous. If one were to practise a judicial restraint when launching forth in praise of Udaipur, one might incur the danger of being regarded as one of those snobs who would rather die than admit that they have seen something new. For—paradox though it be—its novelty is Udaipur's abiding charm. All natural surroundings, embellished (or otherwise) by the hand of humanity are, as Shelley duly pointed out, subject to change of one sort or another. But change is the very essence of the charm of Udaipur. Those who have been lured to undertake the pilgrimage by some of those showy photographs in which the reflections in the lake have acquired all the permanence which the retoucher's art can bestow, may find these reflections entirely absent on the day of their arrival; and instead of regretting this crucial loss, as it might seem, they are delighted by effects upon the ruffled lake which no camera, and few brushes either, could emulate. Looking out from under the huge mango tree that roofs over the picturesque green corner near the deserted pavilions opposite to the first of the Island Palaces, the painter sees the intervening stretch of agitated water thickly carpeted with sunbeams which hopelessly outvie with their scintillations the finials that crown the domes and cupolas with flashing crystal. That glittering pageant is of course quite out of the question; so the baffled painter turns his gaze towards the white walls that rise in steps, and tiers, and galleries and terraces long the lake-side. And he sees these beautiful evidences of man's workmanship improved beyond the ken

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of any painter living by an overlaid fretwork of wavering lights that are never still but dance in unison with the merry wavelets which they reflect. Then there are the ever marching shadows. Though the water may be still, the shadows will continue their progress. One may settle down early with camp-stool and easel, in one of those charming little kiosks overhanging the lake, with the intention of nailing to the canvas, so to speak, the majestic palace of the Ranas, just as it looms there, vast and towering, plunged by noon into a blue half-tone, with all its angles and perspectives and abutments basking in brilliant light. But lo and behold! hardly have we defined our masses and begun to deal with the hues and values of these contrasted tones, when 'the scene is changed', and the elusive shadows which were so definitely cut into patterns have escaped us, just when they were on the point of being captured by the brush. So the *seance* is deferred until the next day when—awful discovery—there are no shadows at all.

And then the people! They come and go in their kaleidoscopic colours, until the despairing painter wonders whether *anything* ever stands still at Udaipur. There is no monotony in the place, or in the difficult but fascinating task of trying to paint it. One may rave over its multiform beauties by day, dream of them by night; but when it comes to fixing the spell upon canvas, the lovely thing often dissolves before us like a mirage. The way to paint Udaipur is to resort to crafty methods; to attack it surreptitiously as it were—keeping one's own counsel. You must stalk your objective, very much as the hunter stalks the deer, concealing your intention almost from yourself. You may direct the boatman when you take the boat at the Water Gate, to proceed to the Mohan Mandir, as the small island pavilion

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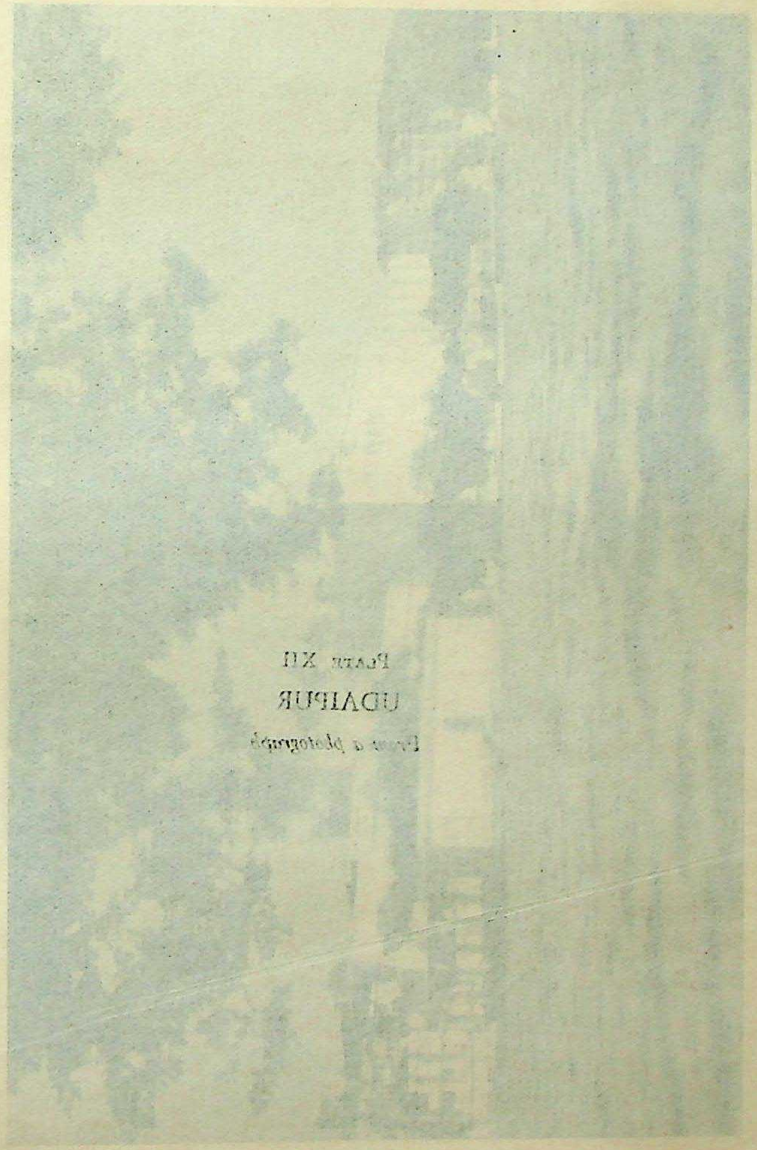

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PLATE XII

UDAIPUR

From a photograph

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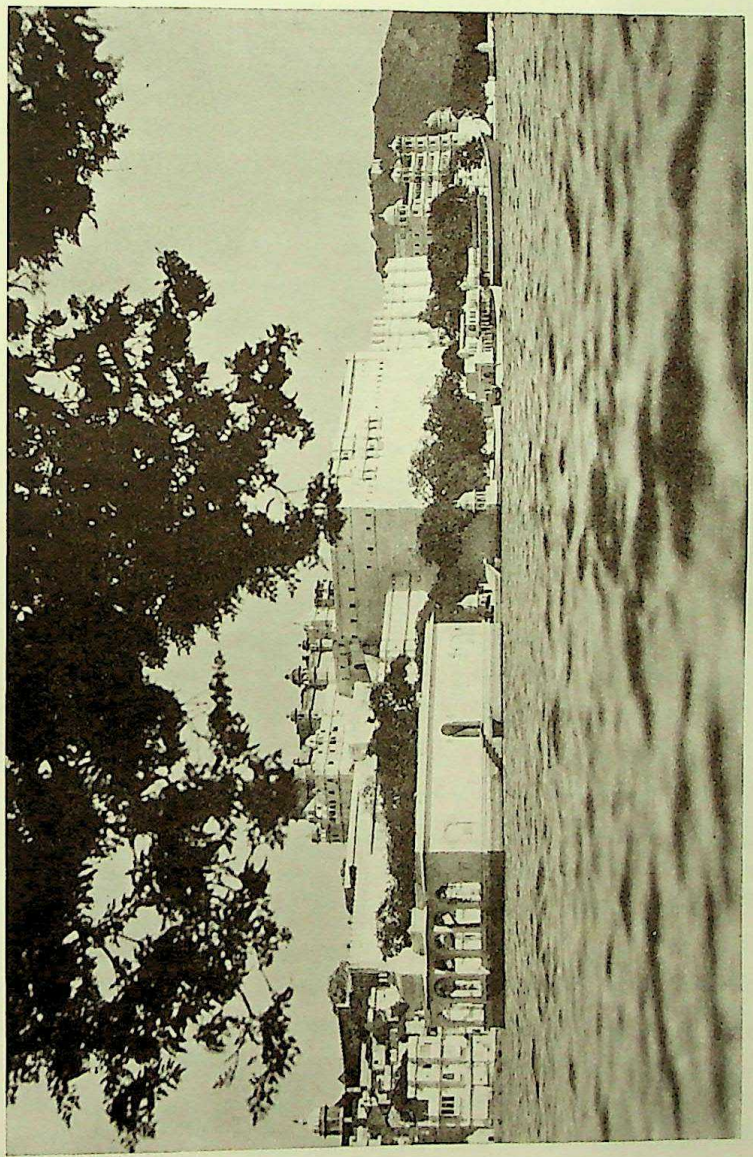
PLATE XII



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which forms so obvious and commanding a sketching position is called. But you must by no means *go* there. Just when the boat is approaching the little flight of steps, and the water tortoises are politely diving off them to make way for your landing, you signal to the oarsman to pass on, and to moor the boat by the old water-wheel near the empty courts and colonnades on the other side of the lake. For out of the tail of your eye you have seen that just there, in that neglected kiosk with the cornice which the overgrowing peepul tree has treated in such vandal fashion, is the very place to catch that floating line of the Jag Niwas Palace, now busily, and all unwittingly, engaged in marvellously beautifying itself by duplicating its exquisite image in the lake; while enchanting effects are pencilling every dome and turret with light. If now you can succeed in landing at this obscure viewpoint without being spotted by the tricksy Fates whose delight it is to envelop the painter of Udaipur in unexpected difficulties, you may really get your picture. But even then you would be well advised not to show it, nor talk about it much, until you get it safely back to the hotel, or some accident may overtake it. Stranger things than that happened in the Arabian Nights, and at Udaipur enchantment is in the very air! Udaipur's unfailing novelty is but the embroidery of its grand and spacious plan. One may select this or that type of Mogul building as the supreme example for effectiveness; but it is by the wholeness of the effect upon the eye that the city wins to a unique place in our affections. This is not due to a unified style of building—the styles and methods are almost as diversified as the lights that flicker across them.[1] But the city, the castle,

[1] Fergusson says: 'Though adopting a Muhammadan form, the Ranas of Udaipur clung to the style of architecture which their ancestors had practised.'

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the Bathing Ghats, and the Island Palaces, hang together—in harmonious contrast. The fugitive Prince Khurrum,[1] when living here under the Rana's protection, chose a refuge on the Jag Mandir island. No wonder that the lovely little palace, which was built for him, and which seems to speak and tell us that it was inspired by himself, was provided with a tiny courtyard with views in several directions. This court opens from that wonderful circular upper room beneath the dome. It has an elaborate window-seat of the exile's favourite white marble, even though there is little space for much besides. We may be quite sure that the creator of the Taj Mahal often sat in that window and looked out over the glorious blue lake, and studied the splendidly placed city to his right; and we may opine that he pictured to himself the time when that little edifice of his retreat should be far eclipsed by noble buildings such as those which today attest the taste and genius of the Imperial master-builder. I have visited these more august monuments to Shah Jahan, but nowhere have sensed his influence more keenly than in this Island Palace, where among the burdened orange-trees, the flowers and the peacocks, he may have indulged musings not less interesting, though probably less martial, than those of the young Alexander among the olive groves of Greece.

The appositeness of this domed palace to the rest of the island, of the island to the lake, and of the magnificent city to its environment furnishes matter for thought not only to the artist engaged in the business of painting pictures, but to the philosophic spectator of Indian art thus wedded to the life and features of the country itself. It is hard to imagine other types of palaces occupying the same positions;

[1] Shah Jahan.

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impossible to think of anything else which could be as satisfying. It is surely the hall-mark of all great art, that it possesses the inevitability which does convince. The dream-like palaces of Udaipur are reminiscent not only of the Mogul's artistic genius but of the pleasant Mogul attitude towards life, which in some ways resembled the Victorian poet's dictum, 'Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?' Fortunately the Indian craftsmen are still at work at Udaipur; the old palaces are still putting forth shoots; and the hammers of the workers resound cheerfully through the waterside arcades. For the best of Udaipur is that it is not—like so much of India's art—merely the memory of a Dream, but that the Dream still endures.

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IMPRESSIONS OF THE TAJ MAHAL

I

The Taj and the Poet

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom—
And conquered her scruples and gloom;
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb—
By the door of a legended tomb;
And I said—'What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?'
She replied—'Ulalume—Ulalume—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!'

These are the lines of one who had never beheld that long avenue of cypresses[1] at Agra nor the great mausoleum at its termination. And yet every admirer of the American poet, who has seen the Taj by moonlight on a frosty night in January, will be able to recognize, in the dim Jumna (which at that period of the year scarcely flows as a river) nothing less than 'the dank tarn of Auber': and, in the bitter shadows of the misty garden, something as like the 'ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir' as one could wish to see. The macabre atmosphere of the moonlit scene, the 'crystalline light', and many other features that blend it with the poem, vanish however by daylight—as becomes the spacious design of the Taj, which could not subserve one mood only. But that

[1] These when seen by moonlight might well represent 'the alley titanic of cypress' of the same poem. The present garden is modern.

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PLATE XIII

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PLATE XIII

SHAH JAHAN

Size : $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 9\frac{1}{4}''$

A good portrait of the creator of the Taj Mahal, seen against a sky of cerulean blue merging into green at the top. The clouds have the brightest tints of sunrise,—orange, gold, and heliotrope. The flowers at the Emperor's feet are executed with exquisite delicacy. The halo around the head is a vivid green (the symbol of immortality) ringed with gold. The face shows very subtle drawing and modelling ; and its exquisite outline helps one to understand how these artists could work with brushes composed of a single squirrel's hair. The jewelled turban is red, with a white and gold band ; the tunic white ; and the trousers beneath the transparent skirt, are gold, embroidered with scarlet flowers. The embroidered slippers are purple ; and the ground is a golden brown, passing into soft greens and umbers, broken by the flowers. The blue of the border is a very elusive shade and its gilded lotus pattern shows fine workmanship.

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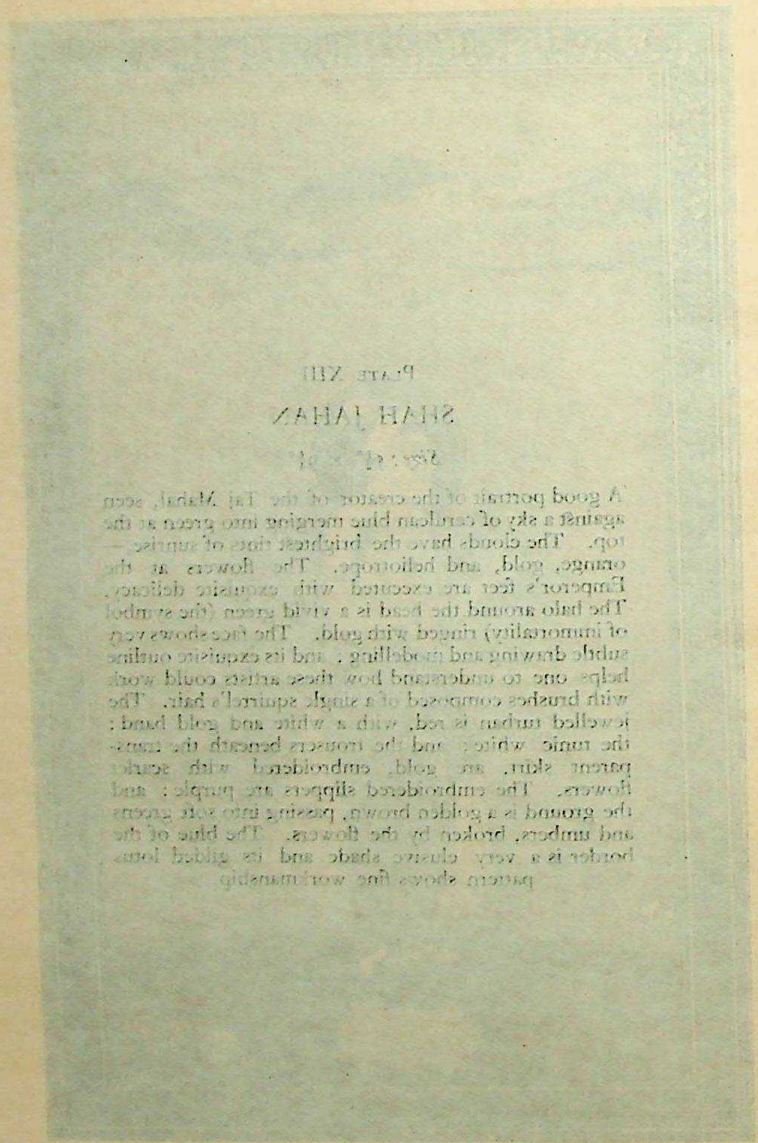

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Edgar Poe did see a Taj in his sad reveries; that he guessed, with the intuition of genius, that a greater artist had in a distant land anticipated his *dream* with the *reality*, one may fairly choose to believe.

For the Taj is certainly real, in spite of its unearthly beauty. Its pallor is of the white marble; its delicate veins of colour are the cornelian, jasper, jade, onyx, and lapis lazuli; its almost fragrant sculptures are garden flowers; the purity of its virginal shapeliness is, after all, hewn from out the quarry; and behind is draped the universal sky. Its creator converted very simple elements into a synthetic wonder; and if the Great Mogul's purse was a good deal longer than other men's, his materials at least were but those which are at the service of all. The earth which could offer the monarch no more, offers every artist no less.

In his portraits this artist-Emperor is generally depicted as somewhat of a dreamer; one misses from the Mogul paintings of him the signs of power which—one would think—should be stamped upon the lineaments of the man who could not only conceive of his 'misty mid-region of Weir', his 'dim lake', and his 'legended tomb' in his mind, but could set the concept palpably before our eyes; and yet, unlike the unhappy bard, could temper that mournful domain with flowers. A great deal has been written about Shah Jahan's object in building the Taj—his devotion to his consort; and the 'Light of the Palace' herself. But the Taj does not merely silently narrate one human love story, however interesting, but stands rather as the monument to Everyman's romance. Does not Everyman, in his heart, appropriate that chaste habitation to his own 'dread burden';—and therein (for nothing less could serve his turn) does he not worthily lay *his* 'lost Ulalume'? The world does not view

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the Taj as the tomb of an Empress so much as the crown of honour of all women who have queened it over man's heart. As we look on its loveliness we can almost hear its maker proclaim: 'Behold the immortal emblem of *all* mortal love!'

Yet, underlying, but articulate, there comes also the message of the inevitable—

> The glories of our blood and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things;
> There is no armour against fate;
> Death lays his icy hand on Kings.

It is the message of the stately Mogul humility which was so strangely intertwined with the stately Mogul pride.

And still, no charnel thoughts are wafted about the Taj, for its architect could not have thought grimly on death. Rather the quintessence of restfulness and peace exhales from the marble flowers of the tomb, and breathes through the garden breezes.

Even if life was indeed that march of splendid enjoyments which the glittering Mogul records tell of, the Taj speaks to us finally of Death—not, like the cypress-crowned poet, or the Eastern scribe, who both only knew him as 'The Terminator of Delights, and the Separator of Companions', but gratefully, as of the last—and sweetest—luxury.

II

The Taj and the Student

There were more ways into Babylon than the well-trodden and well-defended routes, as Cyrus demonstrated very feelingly for the Babylonians when he marched in along the river bed. The grand routes of Indian art are very well frequented; but it will be strange if we also who tread the unfrequented bye-ways with the Indian students do not bring

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back with us from our simpler explorations something of that knowledge which is power.

True an Indian art student is not very talkative—about what he does—but then one may watch him at his work.

His manner of approaching his subject is never circumlocutory. He is a great believer in the attack direct as the best means of overcoming all obstacles—literally all! Even so portentous a problem as that which the Taj offers has for him none of those terrors which might appal the accomplished Western painter. For there is a main difference in the Taj as seen by the stranger from overseas, and by the Indian student from Bombay, which no study or toil however reverent will probably cancel. The one piously perceives the great gulf fixed between himself and the object of his admiration; the other is conscious of no barriers, except the technical question of how to make camel hair brushes, stretched paper, and pigment, however superior in quality, rise to so grand an occasion! The student warily surveys the complex loveliness before him, and calmly sizes up the task, as one differing in degree only, not in essentials, from many others with which he has wrestled (and not unsuccessfully either) of yore. Here—it is true—are domes as light as bubbles, and a baffling whiteness surcharged upon a field azure; here are cypresses (save the mark!) and fine gardens, and, over all, the perplexing sunlight—but what of these? Are not the temples of Ajanta and Ellora more difficult to paint than all the tombs of Upper India? We shall see! So, after pottering about a little between the yew and the cypress, sensing his subject as it were, he mentally stakes out his claim. Then cheerfully producing his colour box and brushes he forthwith proceeds to annex the Taj.

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He paints the Taj as it stands before him—quite oblivious of the disapprobation of these 'debased Western' methods of those distant critics who have, of course, never seen his work. I do not think that he theorizes very much over his picture—but it grows all the same beneath the *artist-craftsman's* touch. He does not see, with the Poet's sombre fancy, an 'alley titanic of cypress' before him, but only an exceedingly hard nut to crack in the furry outlines of those strange trees, trooping like cowled devotees (but that also is not *his* simile) towards the shrine. They must be handled tactfully—those trees—or they will undo him. Nor does he regard the edifice itself so much as 'a legended tomb' as a particularly puzzling study of lights, and shadows almost too fragile to be analysed in colour. Then his background; that blue, paling into those opalescent tints:—and those *obstinate* minarets!

As he works on pluckily he shivers; for Agra is 'a far cry' from Bombay; and this is January, and all the icy sprites from the Himalayas must surely be capering in the great shadow of the North Gate in which, lightly clad, he sits! But there he will continue to sit, and work, and freeze until he has finished his picture; or until the time comes when the garden must give up the students who are in it,—when he and his fellow students shall foregather again, and depart, still shivering but exultant, packed in the clattering little *tongas,* clutching their cherished trophies (a graphic orgy of Taj Mahals indeed!) destined for the delectation of the art patrons of distant Bombay.

And we also follow, somewhat more diffidently, in the cheerful wake of the Indian students, marvelling that we too have been privileged to enter, with them, the Palace of the King. For, once one is *there,* what does it really matter whether one was admitted by the Portal or the Postern?

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III

The Taj and the Philosopher

It is a consoling paradox that the world's most beautiful things are not the property of any one nation, or group, or individual however wealthy, but belong to us all.

All people of taste who have seen the Acropolis of Athens, the Hermes of Olympia, Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love', Verocchio's Horseman, the Taj, or the Ellora Caves acquire these wonders for themselves (as permanent aids to existence), by that inalienable right which surpasses the Divine Right of Kings. The hoard over which the miser sits gloating is his own, but after all a pile of gold is no more than that. The greater treasures are not exclusive ones; no prince or patron can possess alone the brightest jewels of human genius. Such reflections are no doubt trite enough; and yet is it not just the obvious that most persistently eludes us? We enthuse with rapture over our modern discoveries, but who would listen to anyone eulogizing Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' and Michaelangelo's 'David'? These are old stories! It is safer to rave over Gauguin and Cezanne, for at least their merits are still a novelty to many. What a fundamental contempt exists in the human mind for community of thought, or goods, or anything else, no matter how much we may talk about the charms of socialism! The discoverer in any sphere of knowledge is a more subtle danger to the theory of true democracy than the aristocrat. We still strive to efface our common birthmark—by toil, and effort unthinkable; still glory in any kind of release from the uniformity of ordinary views. To be something out of the common is so interesting that it has plunged modern art

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into the limbo of the bizarre, the decadent, the mad. But Man cannot escape the artistic law of the Universe.

It matters not that it was the autocrat Shah Jahan who made the Taj. From the moment of the first inception of its idea in the beauty-haunted mind of the Grand Mogul, the Taj became the property of the world.

So why should not the imperial democrat have employed twenty thousand men to build this tomb for his wife? And why should he not have spent millions upon the work? Shah Jahan, the Oriental despot, was in this a greater Socialist than the most radical of our reformers. He believed in the community of art. He did better than all the philosophers, and wise men who have ever pretended to expound truth when he made the simulacrum of an artist's reverie materialize, stone upon stone, for the greater joy of mankind. It is no use praising the Taj today, for that has been done so often that the miracle of its existence has become as hackneyed as that other small matter of the acorn and the oak tree. We have wireless telegraphy, aeroplanes, and poison gas to astonish us now,—in the Western world. We have discovered the beauty of the sky-scraper and the *art nouveau*! But as surely as the wanderer returns, penitent and humbled, to his forgiving mother, we shall all come back to the Taj.

The value of the possession in the mind of images of natural beauty has been proclaimed by a noble singer:

> For oft, when on my couch I lie
> In vacant or in pensive mood,
> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude.

Such pictures can be painted upon the mind not only by Nature but by Man at his best. A distant view of Mont

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PLATE XIV

THE TAJ MAHAL

Size : 5½" × 8½"

From an old Painting on Ivory

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PLATE XIV

THE TAJ MAHAL

Size : $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$

From an old painting on ivory

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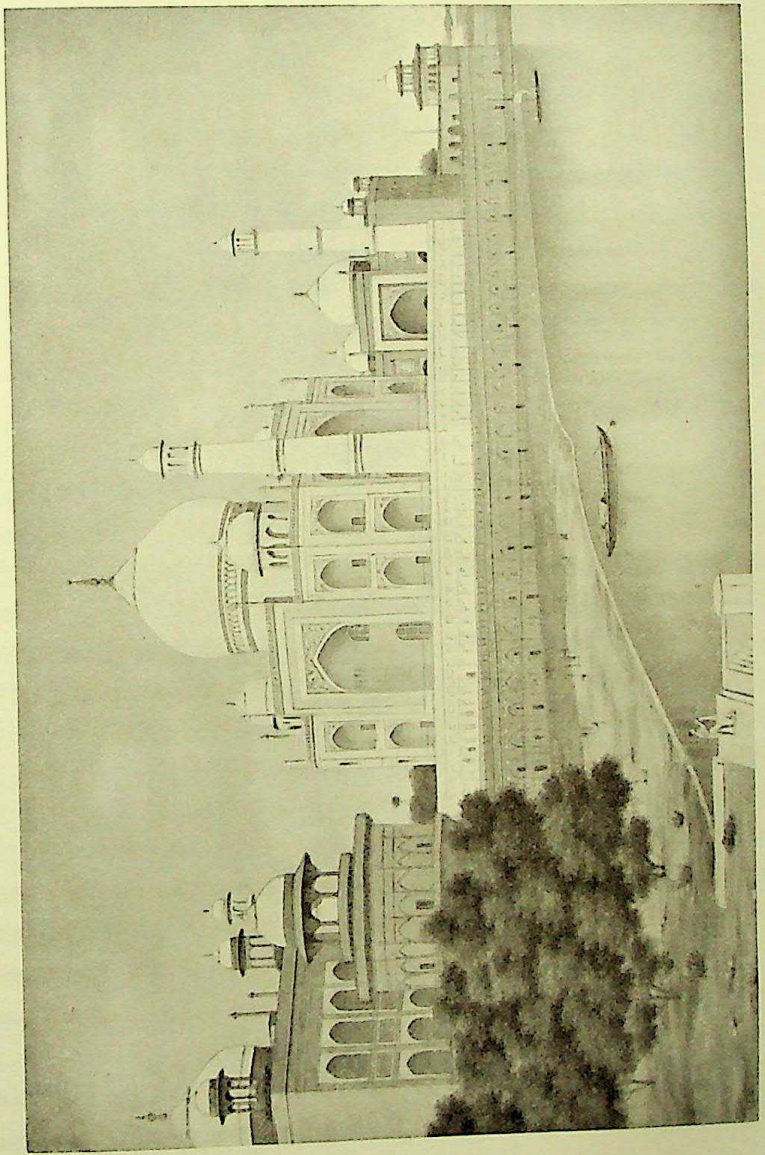
PLATE XIV



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Blanc; a sun-kissed field in England; a picture, a statue, or a building, are all subjects for this introspective art exhibition, the great advantage of which is that we can enter it when we will—without paying !

Those of us who have been lucky enough to see and to enshrine the Taj in this mental gallery cling to it as to a true embodiment of Man's idea of beauty. However tired by the sordid disappointments and mean shifts of life we may be, we have but to call to mind those snow-like contours of inspired marble, to feel the refreshing springs of belief renewing our souls; belief in the dignity of life, by virtue of the sublimity of man's achievement. It is akin to the uplifting thrill which comes over us when we read *King Lear*.

No doubt this is the paramount value of Indian art to mankind. Indian art should be one of the stabilizers of our modern life; should set a standard by which to measure our distance from the goal; and withal to realize that the goal is *not* the unattainable. For the Taj is a summing-up of many forms of beauty, a presentation of many well-known features—line, and marble; jewels, domes, and minarets—all the artist's stock-in-trade in fact; but all so co-ordinated that the creation can never pall. Of all our modern Western painters perhaps that strange genius, Arnold Bocklin, alone *might*—in some more glowing canvas than he ever painted—have given us this sheen of silvery marble in its setting of black cypress against the spangled enamelled sky. But he could not have followed all the moods and phases of the Taj and its protean environment. Shah Jahan recognized this law of limitations when he made the Taj. Smilingly he selected for his arabesque the perfect setting, and cheerfully he left it without a background. He did not try to give the

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finishing touch to the whole work, but abandoned it imperially to the Sun and the Moon to decorate, and they have 'wrought wondrously'; so that the unending message of the Taj is still being unfolded; still we may inhale its exotic perfume from the past, or bathe in the full tide of its triumphant promise.

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MODERN ART AND THE MOGULS

There are fashions even in art, and these may change from time to time, almost, it may be said, from day to day. The Londoner who once admired the smooth classical heroines of Leighton, the Victorian beauties of Millais, or the patriotic landscapes of MacWhirter, has had, within the span of his natural life, to readjust his whole scale of artistic values to a degree which is almost incredible.

This statement will not seem too strong to anyone who has had the opportunity of paying a visit to one or other of the numerous exhibitions of modern art which annually enhance the terrors of the West End of London during the Season. I remember one such exhibition, where, to quote a Press notice: 'We find ourselves in the select company of Eight Modern British Painters' (the capitals are impressive). 'Eight Painters who will, if one may risk to forestall the verdict of posterity, be identified with what is best and most significant in the art of our time.'

The question which of course arises in one's mind is, What *is* the best and the most significant in art? That is just the question which has converted the world of art in Europe into a topsy-turvydom which the pessimist might perhaps parallel, but not easily surpass, by comparison with notorious contemporary political and social upheavals. It is certain that what is often regarded as the best and most significant in the art of our time is utterly different from what was the best and most significant in art of the time of Akbar, or Michaelangelo, or Manet; and this fact must be so obvious to a good many people as to convert the art critic's praise into a very equivocal compliment to the taste which happens to distinguish 'our time'.

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When, for instance, I viewed the exhibition in question, I found its almost bare walls, where every very modern picture was accorded the semi-isolation due to a masterpiece, thickly hung with shadow pictures from the past; and the almost empty galleries crowded with the ghosts of artists of very different calibre, who had long passed beyond the veil. It is so easy to prescribe for posterity, and posterity, like a spoilt child, is so very chary of taking our prescription! Who knows what posterity will have to say of 'our time'; or which of our artists will be numbered with those who are not for an age but for all time?

Perhaps some may think that it would be wiser if our infallible modern critics were to refrain from the pleasant vice of prophecy, but after all they run very little risk in so doing. For by calling posterity as their witness they can throw the case of Art into Chancery and the plaintiff (the long-suffering public) is defrauded of his just verdict. Another generation will most probably witness the discomfiture of many of our present guides; will proclaim that the feet of their chosen statues are of clay; and will reinstate past fashions in art which are anathema today, as surely as the British public reinstated some of the shelved ideals of John Ruskin when they mustered half a million strong at the exhibition of Italian art at the Royal Academy, in 1929.

But the Hydra of modern art has more than the hundred heads of its classical prototype, whose extinction, it will be remembered, could hardly be accomplished even by a demi-god, and then only by cutting off each of its heads, one at a time! Europe has reached and long passed the stage of Post-Impressionism, and would be neck-deep in the senilities of our ultra-moderns (however paradoxical this may sound)

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were it not that our innovators, in their *blase* search after new forms of artistic expression, are somehow forever harking back to Assyria, or Crete, or Egypt, or India, or the South Seas. Wallace and Darwin are said to have discovered the once admired but now widely criticized theory of Natural Selection simultaneously—but as it happened, independently; and probably neither the Dutchman, Coster, nor the German, Gutenberg was the sole inventor of the art of printing.

The discoverer of anything or anybody is not really the important matter. Cimabue may have given Giotto to the world, and be remembered for it; but Giotto's work is more important to us than either the master or his greater pupil. Let us not try to retard the march of modern art even when clothed in its absurdest panoply, recollecting that it is a good deal easier to laugh at Don Quixote for tilting at windmills than it is to admire his knightly courage in doing so. To deny the premises of those who delight in promulgating definitions of what is best and most significant in the art of our time would only be to court the fate which overtook that luckless idealist.

When we turn eastward and glance at the condition of modern art in India, we are confronted by as great if not quite as noisy a conflict of opinion. It is interesting to note, however, that European art writers feel called on to shift their view-point while by no means thinking it necessary to shift their *locale* when they write about art in India. In London the new-fangled pass-word to favour for our artists is 'self-expression'. This shibboleth is altered for the benefit of artists in India to 'Indian art'. The term is made to exclude all innovations except such as are possible within certain restricted and easily recognizable historical

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conventions of oriental drawing and painting, and the rule is as rigid as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

Discovery of new modes of expression in art, though encouraged with the utmost avidity in Europe, is looked upon askance by the anxious European friends of art in India. Woe betide the British artist who dares to follow the manner of painting of his Victorian predecessors! Woe betide the Indian artist who does not pretend to adhere strictly to the manner of the Mogul artists or their distant precursors! The voices which clamour for 'self-expression' in the one unite to condemn it in the other.

The international inconsistency is humorous enough from the sceptical onlooker's standpoint; but far from mirth-provoking when viewed from that of the Indian painter who finds his Indian street-scenes or pictures of daily life incontinently labelled as 'Non-Indian', although they may be redolent of the rich fragrance of 'the Seventh Continent'.

When the defunct Mogul is so often dragged in as an *ex parte* witness; when the absence of his mark from an Indian picture is so frequently held to disqualify the modern Indian artist from participation in the rights of his own inheritance, it may not be out of place to consider what really constituted the Mogul point of view in art. So far from finding that it was a narrow or esoteric view, both historical and intrinsic evidences to the contrary are overwhelming.

The student of history will find ample contemporary testimony to the breadth of vision which characterized the patronage of the Mogul Emperors. Instead of tiresome restrictions being placed upon the methods of artistic expression employed by the painters of Akbar or Jahangir, they were encouraged to seek and find sources of artistic

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PLATE XV

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PLATE XV

CAMELS FIGHTING

Size: $8\frac{3}{4}'' \times 5''$

This Persian picture is one of the most spirited renderings of this subject that I have seen. The border is typical, consisting of a dainty convention of red and white buds on a ground of lapis lazuli, with a thin outline of Indian red. The picture itself is a delicate monochrome in which the only colour introduced is a dull red in the trappings, bridles, and gums of the animals. The background has been done with bold conventional touches of gold, apparently by another hand. This subject was a favourite with the Persian artists, and many variations are to be seen. I am indebted to Sir Cowasji Jehangir (Junior) for bringing to my notice (while these pages were in the press) a reproduction of a nearly similar picture in Mr. Quaritch's catalogue No. 462 of 1932.

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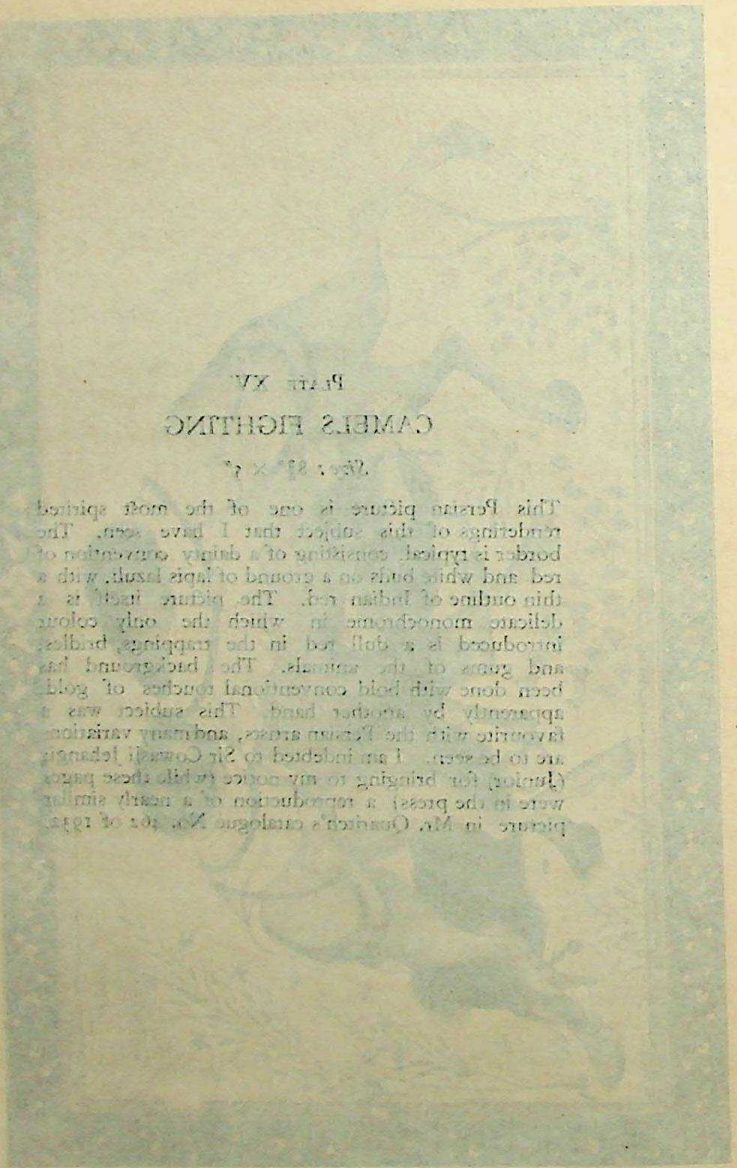

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inspiration wherever they felt impelled to do so.

Indian art was not held by those patrons of taste and discernment to be confined within geographical limitations; its range was to embrace all that the national consciousness recognized as art. It was not thought to be artistic heresy for the Mogul artist to pass, in spirit, the boundaries of the ocean and to recruit the stores of his artistic pabulum from the portfolios of the Catholic priests or the foreign ambassadors.

'Jahangir's mania for collecting included all kinds of European curiosities, watches, jewels, but especially pictures. Jahangir had a picture gallery of his own and enriched it with the work of many European artists, which the Portuguese and the English Ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, brought to him as presents.'[1] Sir Thomas Roe's experience of the Grand Mogul's wonderful interest in art (so inimitably described in the Ambassador's own account) is sufficiently summarized by Elphinstone's brief but significant statement: 'Sir Thomas also gave a picture to the Mogul and was soon after presented with several copies among which he had great difficulty in distinguishing the original.'

Jahangir's interest in European painting is thus explained by another author: 'As a youth he saw the religious pictures which the first Jesuit Mission brought to the court of the Great Mogul for he accompanied the Emperor to their Chapel, and heard the discussions which took place concerning these examples of western painting. This gave him an interest in European art which lasted all his life.' The truth is that Jahangir inherited from his father a noble breadth of vision in art if not in statesmanship, and consequently was devoid of petty fear of eclectic influence, rather believing

[1] *Indian Book Painting*, by Kuhnel and Goetz.

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in the influx of Western ideas, which of course need not imply Western ideals. Jahangir had also imbibed from his father—if indeed the belief was not inherent in his aesthetic tendencies—a high opinion of the importance and dignity of the artist's calling.

One has only to open the pages of Bernier, who was an astute observer, to learn that the Mogul Emperor's taste was very faintly reflected in that of the nobles, who as a rule decried art and belittled the artists. There is no reason to suppose that Mogul India was devoid of its full share of that Philistinism which is the natural enemy of art the world over, or of the type of opponent personified in an extreme form by the puritan iconoclast whose destruction of England's art treasures is still mournfully impressed on the visitors to the ruins of many a noble chantry or shrine.

The artists of the period were at a loss—as indeed artists not uncommonly are—and it was the ruler's personal aid which restored to them the self-confidence which comes of pride in one's own calling; which stimulated in them the sense of emulation, which helps the production of fine work. The Mogul was the last who would willingly have endured to see obstacles put in the way of the free and unfettered progress of art, whether by arbitrary demands for 'self-expression' or its antithesis, archaic formulas of Eastern conventions.

The belief that art is a valuable means to ennoble and to elevate was beautifully uttered by Akbar, whose words are quoted by his minister and chronicler, Abul Fazl: 'One day at a private party of friends, His Majesty [the Emperor Akbar], who had conferred on several the pleasure of drawing near him, remarked, "There are many that hate painting; but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter

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had quite peculiar means of recognizing God; for a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the giver of life, and will thus increase in knowledge."[1]

This view of art, analogous it its splendid humility to the deep sincerity of the primitive Italian painters, might well be recorded once again, in golden letters, today.

[1] *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blochmann's translation, volume I, page 108.

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INDIAN ART AND MODERN CRITICISM

The art critic is no doubt a privileged soul; and more often than not puts a sad strain upon the faculties of forbearance of those who read him. He even moved the late J. M. Whistler (not the most patient of artists) to cite Balaam's ass as 'the first great critic'! Yet he flourishes in our midst, and his family seems to increase and multiply rather than to show signs of speedy extinction. His is the Presence that from time immemorial has crossed the path of the aspiring aesthete. It chilled the efforts of the first artist of the species *homo sapiens*, and made him spoil the bit of reindeer-horn which he was beautifying with a flint graver, by the criticism (expressed of course by signs) that the pioneer was 'on the wrong lines'.

In time artistic man became inured to this monitory presence, which has followed him through history as closely as his shadow; and which follows him still. People have come at last to regard the critic as part and parcel of the constellation,—to shine with the reflected light of the celebrities he chooses to adhere to, and so to share, to some extent, in their glory. So the art critic, ever since, has hooked his waggon to his bright particular star in the artistic firmament; and if, as sometimes happens, it turns out to be only a meteor after all, which, after whirling him through the empyrean, deposits him ignominiously in the midden, he need only rise and dust himself, and look out for a safer star. No one will blame him for the error, for no one remembers it. Our art world approves of this dual system of the successful artist and the laudatory critical parasite.

Thus considered, the time-honoured spectacle of Mr. E. B. Havell, 'the (English) father of the Calcutta school',

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clinging to the star of Dr Abanindra Nath Tagore, the successful artist, and swearing the while metaphorical murder against all who dare to differentiate perceptibly from the only or true type of the 'Indian' artist, is not so great a phenomenon as might be supposed by the 'constant reader' of Mr Havell's writings, jaded *ad nauseam* by everlasting reminders of the Great Twin Brethren. He may long secretly to get a glimpse of Dr Tagore just for once *without* Mr Havell in explanatory, laudatory and expostulatory attendance; or even for a sight of Mr Havell *solus*—without his 'disciple', which of course is impossible. So 'Constant Reader' may heave a sigh, but understands that if he would have the one he must put up with the other; for assuredly famous artists and their devoted Press agents are as inevitable a partnership as the great Paracelsus and the helpful Djinn which he conveniently carried in the hilt of his sword; or the greater Socrates and the attendant daemon who always used to jog his elbow at the right moment.

Such partnerships are rare, because the artists are rare; more frequently they have died unwept, unhonoured and unsung because no critic had 'taken them up' in their day. It would be an entertaining subject to discuss the vagaries of the art critic down the ages; to inquire after the artistic reputations which he helped to create indeed, but which have now worn so desperately threadbare. But in Indian art the artist has been far less indebted to the critic for weal or for woe than has been the case in the West. It is a truism to point to the anonymity of the painters of Ajanta; of the sculptors of Ellora and Elephanta, and of many of the artists whose works illuminate the Mogul and the Rajput albums.

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No, the art critic never did his worst to Indian art before our own time; the cynic may deduce therefrom some reflections on the nature of his indispensability which it would be painful to pursue, and high treason to utter. Anyway, the obscurantist type of art critic has wormed his way into Indian art at last, with a vengeance. We hear his strident paradoxes on all sides. He has become a very concrete obstacle in the path of progress; and must be reckoned with by those Indian artists who claim the right of freedom in self-expression, and by all who have at heart the welfare and progress of Indian art.

In order to appreciate the ramifications and implications of 'Havellism' (to use the term which has crystallized that hotch-potch of parochial, historical and artistic values in Indian art criticism of which Mr Havell's books are a leading example) we must consider this author's own explanation—such as it is—of how, when he was Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, he trained India's first 'live artist', Dr Abanindra Nath Tagore. 'It was not until I swept away the whole system,' he writes (with reference to his *bete noire,* art in Bombay) 'that any Indian school produced a real live artist.'[1] This little gem of egotism could perhaps

[1] See Introduction. 'In 1853 Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy offered a lakh of rupees towards the foundation of an Art School (in Bombay), and the drawing classes of that school were opened in 1857. The development of this institution from these humble beginnings forms one of the most interesting and stimulating incidents in the field of educational enterprise in British India. The Bombay Government added continuously and very largely to the sum donated by the founder of this, the first Government School of Art in India: the first definitely progressive step was the appointment in 1865 of Mr John Griffiths, a painter, Mr Lockwood Kipling, a sculptor, and Mr. Higgins, a metal-worker, to direct, independently, the different sections of the school. Mr Kipling's classes were established in the present compound in a modest structure which is still utilized; since then other more spacious buildings have been erected. In 1880 Mr Lockwood Kipling went to Lahore to start a Government School of Art there ...

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only be matched from the works of Benvenuto Cellini. But then Benvenuto, though blustering, was at least creative. But what was Mr Havell's discovery in the training of Indian art students? Naturally we seek in his works for that absorbing revelation; for no Principal of any Art School has ever trained any students whatsoever by merely 'sweeping away' anything.

Mr Havell is not at all shy of taking credit to himself for Dr Tagore and the Bengal School; indeed the congenial theme recurs constantly, in the new editions of his works in particular. He was the guide, philosopher, and friend of the 'New Bengal School'. He was also—by the way—running an art school under Government. Now the 'New Bengal School', continuing this lead, claims to be responsible for the only true art education in India today. Is this miracle all due to that clean sweep of Mr Havell's in Calcutta?

Of course Bombay and those adjacent regions of Western India wherein lie the Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta Caves, still dwell (in spite of 'Havellism') in the gall of bitterness. But what—I repeat—what was the method of Mr Havell's exclusive training of Indian art students? We may imagine

'The Bombay School of Art (as it is popularly termed) has enjoyed the personal patronage of the Governors of Bombay since the days of Sir Bartle Frere; and partly in consequence of this, a great deal of public interest has centred in its development in recent years... The School's history has from the beginning been that of an active pioneer, in many branches of art. In 1919, Lord Lloyd, then Governor of Bombay, encouraged the establishment of classes of mural painting, the organizing of advanced Life Classes, and the expansion of the Architectural Section of this Art School, which is now the largest in the Empire... The Bombay School draws its inspiration from the many famous and incomparable monuments of ancient Indian painting, sculpture, and architecture which are situated in Western India, and on the other hand continues the broad traditions of the Mogul by refusing to confine its sources of artistic inspiration within geographical limits, allowing its students the same freedom of access to the world-arena of selection as is afforded to their fellow students in the West.' —*Bombay*, by Samuel T. Sheppard, page 139.

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him tirelessly at his task; hard at work in the crowded classes, from which he had swept away those sad and bad eclectic influences, the Greek and Roman casts; from which he had expunged the last relics of the baneful 'foreign influence'—with the exception of course of the presence of Mr Havell, the European Principal, himself. But every intelligent reader, however enthralled by the picture this author has drawn of himself as the modern Hercules in his self-attested feat of cleansing the new Augean stables of our Indian art schools, will sooner or later inquire: 'How and what did Mr Havell *teach*?'.

This is precisely the subject of my inquiry and I seek in his books for the panacea. It is slow in coming, for in his copious works the creative note lags tardily behind the destructive onslaughts upon opponents as airy as many of his own feats of 'pedagogy' (the word is his own) in India. But the information comes at last. His account of how he educated Dr Tagore in painting presses hard upon the following remarkable sentence: 'New India, in matters of taste, is now split into two camps, one of which hails the propaganda of the Bombay School as the modern revelation of art to educated India, and the other which follows the lead of Dr Abanindra Nath Tagore, the founder of the new Calcutta School of Painting.'[1]

This simple division of aesthetic thought in a country of three hundred and fifty millions surely requires a sterner exercise of the reader's credulity than the partition of Poland! Bombay and Calcutta are made to stand, in this sweeping allocation of Indian 'taste', like Dives and Lazarus with the great gulf fixed between them. There are no transitional half-tones in this picture of 'India from within';

[1] *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition (1928), page 260.

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no intervening shades or stages of thought are allowed to weaken the striking antithesis. The other Indian provinces are all left out because, according to this writer, they must adhere to the one side or the other, to the sheep (or 'saved') of Bengal, or the goats (or 'condemned') of Bombay.

Hard upon this statement, which gives the key to all this author's special pleading, follows at last one of the few passages in his works purporting to reveal Mr Havell, as *teacher* of drawing and painting. He writes: 'Dr Tagore never came within the depressing aesthetic environment of an Indian University, and very speedily gave up the *European routine of technical training which was his starting point as an artist.* Having thus escaped the Scylla and Charybdis, upon which so many Indian art students have been wrecked, he devoted himself to a close study of the Indian pictures which I was then collecting for the Government Art Gallery, and this collection was the guiding influence in his artistic development, though *in matters of technique he has adopted a compromise between European and Indian methods.*'[1]

It will be observed that the mountain has been in labour again, and produced another mouse! Mr Havell's epoch-making discovery in teaching was to give Indian students Mogul pictures to copy. Not a very exacting strain this, upon the ex-Principal of the Calcutta School of Art's teaching capacity; and ever so much easier than teaching a Life Class. So the beginning of Dr Tagore's training in art, as appears from Mr Havell's own account, was 'the European routine of technical training'; while the end of it is that (like the Bombay School) 'in matters of technique

[1] Ibid., page 261. I cannot find this admission in the first edition of *Indian Sculpture and Painting* published in 1908. I may have overlooked it, or Mr Havell may have decided to copy Bombay in this—as in so many other instances. The italics are mine.

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he has adopted a compromise between European and Indian methods'.

I shall return to this question of Mr Havell's use and understanding of Mogul painting. First, however, let us notice his description of his revival of mural painting in India; for, as Bombay has been specializing in this branch of art on a large and organized scale for over a decade, Mr Havell could not of course have left the necessary references to this important subject out of the second editions of his books, although such are scarce in his first editions published many years earlier. 'My own efforts, as Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, were directed towards finding for his (i.e. Dr Tagore's) remarkable genius the widest scope in mural decoration.' How did these efforts, assisted by the partnership with genius, materialize? 'One of his earliest efforts was an essay in Indian fresco buono (*sic*). He also on my advice began the preparation of a series of cartoons for the decoration of the Government Art Gallery in fresco, but the scheme was dropped after my retirement.' That is positively all there is to it.[1] This abortive little effort, too slight to be even mentioned among artists, of one Indian art student advised by Mr Havell, has justified our author in posing as an expert on mural decoration (especially in his second editions) and condemning fiercely the work of Indian students of the Class of Mural Painting in Bombay, which work he had never even seen!

Every artist knows that an ounce of production is better than a ton of theories in art. The Bombay School which, for some unfathomable reason, Mr Havell has attacked

[1] On page 171 of *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (second edition) Mr Havell tells us: 'I engaged a Jaipur painter to decorate the entrance hall of the Calcutta School of Art and to give instruction to the students.' Honour to whom honour is due!

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since 1912, but with special severity since 1925,[1] has liberated and revealed the abilities of scores of clever Indian mural painters where Mr Havell's sentimentalizing apparently resulted in the discovery of one; and that one abandoned mural painting almost as soon as he began it!

The following is a mere fraction of what this critic writes of certain paintings of the Indian students of the Bombay School, of which, as he himself admits, he had seen no more than one or two photographic reproductions in a magazine: 'A European artist, viewing these paintings with indulgence and condescension, might find much merit in them as the work of promising Indian schoolboys, but only if he does not know or care to learn the end of the story—these clever schoolboys never grow up! Therein lies the damnable defect of the whole system.'[2] Here Mr Havell perhaps achieves his greatest feat of imagination. He has created (1) a European artist who is as imaginary as the opinions attributed to him; (2) a criticism upon paintings which he has never seen; (3) Indian students who 'never grow up' (perhaps here he has borrowed something from the author of Peter Pan?); and (4) a 'system' of training which however 'damnable' does not exist in the Bombay School.

He adds to all this one of those jejune sentiments which are scattered throughout his works like the tinsel spangles on the sham fairies in the pantomime: 'Mother India may be in many ways inefficient and behind the times, but in the upbringing of her own children as artists she has nothing to

[1] See Mr Havell's extraordinary attack on Bombay in the India Society's organ *Indian Art and Letters* of November 1925, in which he wrote: 'I could not discover at the Wembley Exhibition a single work of the Bombay schools which showed an Indian outlook on art,' etc.

[2] Op. cit., page 258.

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learn from Modern Europe.'[1] Modesty no doubt prevented his naming the one exception that proves the rule of this profound reflection. No wonder that a writer recently observed of the 'Father of the Bengal School': 'It must by now be generally known that the controversial methods of Havellism are peculiar: they can only be effective when scanned by the uninitiated reader. Mr Havell misrepresents the views of his supposed opponent, and then shatters the fallacies he puts into his mouth. The game is really very easy because the mythical opponent does not talk sense.'[2]

It is twenty times easier to give a man sympathy than to give him the time, trouble, and expense of practical help. It is fifty times easier to tell the Indian student that he is being deorientalized by foreign art, than to assist him practically to master the technique of oil painting; and it is a hundred times easier to sit down and pour out regretful sentimental effusions upon the past of Indian painting, sculpture, and architecture than it is to help to shape a course for their advance today. Mr Havell's books exude sentimentality until we yearn to leave this pent, boudoir-like atmosphere—so hostile to activity in art—for the open landscape, even if the weather outside be unfavourable.

Let us consider Mr Havell's avowed method of training Indian students—that method for which (he says) he 'discarded' the wretched system of teaching at present in vogue in Bombay.[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] *Times of India*, 8 August 1931.

[3] Mr Havell left India in 1907. I started the present system of training in the Bombay School of Art in 1919 by means of a Class of Mural Painting (endowed with scholarships by Government) and organized Life Classes. Mr Havell's statement is therefore an anachronism. It occurs in his letter in *Indian Art and Letters* for November 1925, and is elsewhere expressed even more strongly in his published correspondence (see Introduction).

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PLATE XVI

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PLATE XVI

AURANGZEB AS A YOUNG MAN

Size: $5\frac{3}{4}'' \times 8\frac{3}{4}''$

A beautiful drawing. The head is a character study, and obviously a studied and excellent likeness. The character of the ear, eyebrow, eyes, nose, and neck, are drawn with searching study. The drawing is touched with red and yellow here and there; the turban and accessories, with red and gold. The border is a saxe-blue with gilt decoration.

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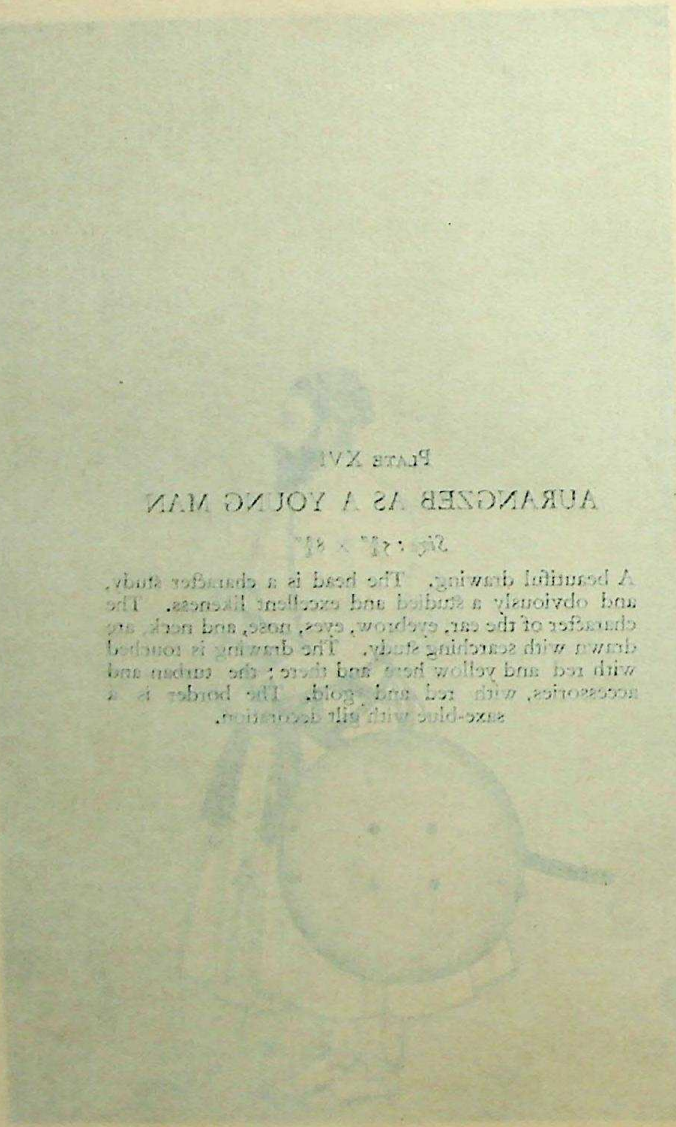

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He has explained that he set his students to study—i.e. to copy—Mogul pictures. But how did he teach them to study the principles upon which Mogul painting was based ? The Moguls could not have produced their pictures without faithful and constant reference to the only original which has been regarded as worth copying by the artists of all races (from the Stone Age to Ajanta, and so up to the present time)—to Life itself.

Copying is an elementary branch of the painter's art, a partial means of transition, for the beginner, from the Lower School to the Upper Classes. It has been pointed out that one of the radical defects of copying as a means of instruction for art students is that no picture is perfect, and that the copyist has to take as much pains over faulty or mediocre passages as he does over the brilliant ones.

The art galleries of Europe are crowded with copyists, some of whom can copy so well that one can hardly tell the difference between their work and the originals. The reader may see them on any 'paying day', at the National Gallery, when he visits London. In my student days copying one 'Old Master' still existed precariously as an elementary subject in the most elementary department of the school.[1] Its place in the scheme cannot possibly take that of painting from Life itself, to which it can only serve as an introduction for a novice. (We do not teach Indian students to copy in the Bombay School of Art.) The Moguls went direct to Nature for the inspiration for their famous school of Indian painting, as every other noted school of painting has done from the Caverns of the Pyrenees to the present

[1] The Royal Academy schools ; we had to copy a head by an 'Old Master' (among other tests) before being allowed to pass from the Antique School into the 'Half-Upper'.

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day. The duplication of some of their pictures was of course quite another matter; and when the artists left Nature to follow the copies of it, the school very soon collapsed—just as reduplication killed the art of Egypt.

Copying is simply the easiest, and most mechanical occupation in the whole field of painting. The only excuse for making copies a staple product of any art school would be the laziness of the Principal, or his incapacity to teach his students how to draw accurately from Nature. Mogul Painting shows extremely accurate and searching drawing direct from Nature, essentially the same and sometimes not a whit inferior to that which delights us in the work of Holbein.

Abul Fazl, Akbar's famous minister, tells us very clearly in the *Ain-i-Akbari* that 'His Majesty (Akbar) himself sat for his likeness, and also ordered to have the likenesses taken of all the grandees of the realm'. This is clear enough; and indeed Mr Havell has drawn the naive, almost child-like deduction: 'It was, no doubt, the practice of drawing from the living model, enjoined by Akbar and Jahangir on their painter-calligraphists, which led to the very remarkable achievements in portraiture and direct representation of animal life of the best artists of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.'[1]

Yes, no doubt, it was precisely that. But Mr Havell hurriedly adds (for his, as we shall see, is a very tempered admiration of Mogul art), 'they cannot be put in the same class as the great masters of Ajanta and Bagh, who followed their own traditions, and were not under dilettanti dictation'. This is a somewhat original way of describing two among the greatest art patrons that the world has seen, Akbar

[1] Op. cit., page 204.

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and Jahangir! What would happen to the author who ventured to describe the patronage of Phidias by Pericles; of Raphael by the Pope; or of Velazquez by Philip, as 'dilettanti dictation'? Patronage is *not* dictation—as Vasari's testimony alone proves. But Mr Havell doesn't like the idea of drawing from life, and this obsession is the trouble which causes his chronic belittling of Mogul and European art. He cannot really be unaware of the very close similarity between the methods of the Eastern and Western hemispheres in art;[1] and he desperately endeavours to avert the inevitability of the obvious application of the historical *fact* of this similarity by adding the following amazing announcement: 'The painters of the Hindu School, whose superiority as artists impressed Abul Fazl so strongly, did not take "drawing from the life" in the same sense as the modern European academician. It did not mean that the student sat down in the front of his model and reproduced as closely as possible the reflection of it on the retina of his own eyes; but that after the most careful observation he went away to record his mental impression of it; returning occasionally" (that was a happy thought certainly!) 'if necessary, to refresh his memory.'

But Mr Havell has already told us that the success of the school of Mogul portraiture was due to painting from life—indeed it is a self-evident fact in Mogul painting which cannot be denied. What was the use, if the artist had a sitter for his likeness in front of him, of his *going away* to

[1] 'I was told recently by an Inspectress of Girls' Schools in this country that there was a radical difference between the Occidental and the Oriental way of (literally) looking at things, the Occidental seeing them in the round and the Oriental as flat surfaces bounded by lines. Put thus simply the absurdity of this view is obvious to anyone who knows anything of art in either continent.' —Mr Oswald Couldrey in the *Bombay Chronicle* (Sunday edition), 22 August 1931. In India I have *frequently* heard the same heresy uttered by Europeans.

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record his 'mental impression' of the sitter? Why not record it then and there? Mr Havell is here explaining the success of Mogul portraiture; yet he winds up the whole utterly non-artistic hypothesis as follows: 'In this way the artist's memory and powers of observation were developed to an extraordinary degree, as we can see in the wonderful memory paintings of the Ajanta and Bagh viharas.'

The comparison is baffling, for how can one compare the methods of *portrait painting* (in the seventeenth century), with the methods of *mural painting* of the Buddhist School (of the first five centuries)? Abul Fazl's compliment to the Hindu portrait painters of Akbar's period has been confused by Mr Havell. Abul Fazl actually wrote: 'Most excellent painters are now to be found and masterpieces worthy of a Bihzad (the Persian artist) may be placed at the side of the wonderful works of the European painters who have attained world-wide fame.... More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art, while the number of those who approach perfection, or those who are middling, is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus,' etc, etc.[1]

It will be seen that Abul Fazl was giving information about the comparative values in art in his own time. The whole passage is in the present tense. Yet Mr Havell wrests the argument so as to suggest that Abul Fazl's admiration of the Hindu portraitists was because they did *not* draw from life.[2] If he does not mean to convey this what does he mean to convey? The Buddhist artists of the Ajanta

[1] *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blochmann's translation, volume I, page 107.

[2] 'Mughal painting in the hands of its actual exponents remained intrinsically an art of prose, its acknowledged intention being frank realism, an effort to represent the object "as in itself it really is".'—*Indian Painting under the Mughals*, by Percy Brown, page 74.

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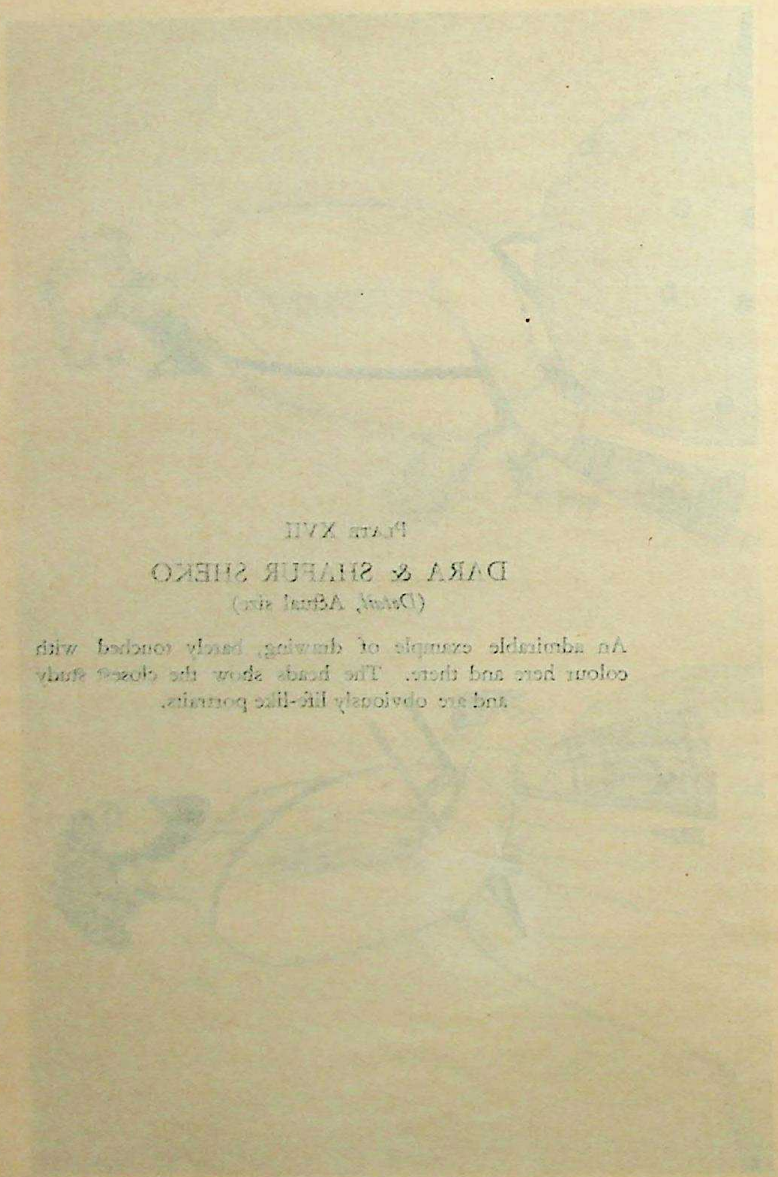

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Caves undoubtedly drew copiously from life itself, and Mr Havell may rest assured that many a sketch from Nature assisted their 'memory drawings'.

It is however something to see that he ascribes 'the very remarkable achievements' to the period of 'dilettanti dictation' of the Mogul Emperors! This should count as 'one up', anyway, to the Moguls in this astounding game of 'heads I win, tails you lose'. Is it a wonder that professional artists find it hard to read Mr Havell's books? One can be sure that this author's own record as a painter was entirely undistinguished; for his views on art-teaching are those an artist could hardly condone even in one for whom the higher branches of art and the practice of them are a closed book.

But what can one say of an art critic who can write thus:

'The pernicious principles of the Italian Renaissance, the bigotry of Puritanism, and the pedantry of pseudo-classical education combined to destroy the national art of Europe.'[1] Imagine the Medici, Cromwell's Ironsides, and the Restoration dramatists all lumped *together* as conspirators against the art of Europe!

This rebellion against the lamentable but certainly incontrovertible historical fact of the Italian Renaissance runs like a refrain through Mr Havell's pitiful ballad of Indian art. His thesis is that India gave art to Europe,[2] and that all was going very well until the Renaissance came along and upset the apple-cart. The advent of the new learning was the cardinal blunder (like 'the sad and sorrowful union'

[1] *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition, page 236.

[2] 'The spirit of Indian idealism breathes in the mosaics of St. Mark's at Venice, just as it shines in the mystic splendours of the Gothic Cathedrals.'—*Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition, page 188.

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of England and Scotland, according to Andrew Fairservice, in *Rob Roy*) which knocked the world's art to pieces, and cursed India with the 'Western Pedagogue'. Europe would still have been chiselling and painting in the one and only Indian style if we could only have eliminated Ruskin's Modern Painters and all their works! Or, in simpler form, Mr Havell urges that Europe's art would have been great, if it hadn't been for Europe's great artists!

The reader may cull this enchanting theory at length and at his leisure from Mr Havell's own books; it does not here concern me except in so far as it impinges upon his protests against Mogul and European influences upon Indian art, which are largely unsound. And if Europe derived art from India, why should this critic criticize the Moguls for their interest in European methods of painting, seeing that, at worst, they were only taking back to India something of what India had already given to Europe? 'The Mogul Court painters were temperamentally realists' (we shall see presently that 'Havellism' affirms the vast numerical as well as artistic superiority of *Hindu* artists among these *realists*!) 'and therefore inclined to admire the realism of the European pictures they saw. But except under Jahangir's dictation, they did not copy them as the modern Indian student does, consciously or unconsciously' (Mr Havell wins either way!), 'at the suggestion of his European teachers.'[1]

Now, as every novice in the history of Indian art knows, the finest flowering of the Mogul school of painting was during the brilliant patronage of Jahangir; so that all this depreciatory and utterly inaccurate reference to 'Jahangir's dictation', etc, cannot conceal the sad fact that the 'European Father of the Bengal School' has here made another serious

[1] *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition, page 224.

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slip in his logic. Even amid the tissue of inconsistencies which form the warp and woof of the fabric of Mr Havell's criticism, this error stands out—a very perfect example of its species. Of course Jahangir did *not* 'dictate' on art for the simple reason that his artists' superb work could not have been done under dictation. But these side-issues are as a mere bagatelle in face of the admission implied in Mr Havell's own indictment of Jahangir, for he cannot deny that the system which he attacks—whatever it may have been—was that which obtained during the zenith of Mogul painting.

But the Moguls came originally from *outside* of India, so—no matter though these Emperors employed thousands of artists and craftsmen. Whatever is best under the Moguls, Mr Havell tells us, is *not* Mogul; whatever isn't, is. There we have his commentary on Mogul art in a nutshell. His followers display the same queer kink. Not long ago one of them—Mr O. C. Gangoly—told the Rotary Club in Madras (according to the Press reports[1]): 'By forced conversions of different groups of artistic community, highly skilled craftsmen of diverse nationalities and schools were annexed, at one stroke, for the benefit of the development of Islamic Culture and passed automatically within the boundaries of Islam.'

Anon he explained how Muslim art owes its existence to the Hindus. 'Indeed more than 80 per cent of the so-called Mogul painters in the court of the Moguls were Hindus, and hardly 20 per cent were Muslims.'[2]

[1] *The Statesman*, 6 May 1931.

[2] See Mr Mohammed Ishaque's letter in the *Statesman*, 19 May 1931, and Mr Kanaiyalal Vakil's article on the subject in *The Bombay Chronicle* (Sunday edition) of 26 July 1931.

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Mr Mohammed Ishaque's comment upon these brilliant examples of 'Havellism' is too good to be paraphrased. He writes: 'If by forced conversion the Muslims swelled the ranks of their artists and painters, may we ask Mr Gangoly how he accounts for the vast majority of the artists in the Mogul Court who belonged to his community.' Mr O. C. Gangoly is the Editor of *Rupam* which is a great distributor of Havellism; he has been complimented on his brilliant editorship by Lord Zetland (no less) in the conclaves of the India Society. Hence it is not easy to get at truth, which being great, ought sooner or later to prevail—even in Indian art.

Only a hardy optimist will see much hope of this desirable consummation of the controversy when he peruses such information as the following: 'And what is it in the Taj Mahal—that indefinable something, always felt rather than understood by those who have tried to describe it—but the subtle inspiration of Hindu genius? . . . The inspiration of the Taj came not from its Muslim builders: it was the spirit of India which came upon it and breathed into it the breath of life.'[1]

But who, one naturally asks, *invoked* this spirit of India? Who made the Taj materialize so that it stands where no Taj had ever stood before—*facile princeps* among the world's architectural treasures? Who but the 'dilettanti dictators' —the Moguls?

Let us see to what goal Mr Havell's iteration of these esoteric obsessions—his denials that India could learn anything worth while from outside her own geographical boundaries, will lead us. 'From the seventh or eighth to the fourteenth century was the great period of Indian art,

[1] *The Ideals of Indian Art*, by E. B. Havell, page 120.

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corresponding to the highest development of Gothic art in Europe, and it is by the achievements of this epoch, rather than by those of Mogul Hindustan, that India's place in the art-history of the world will eventually be resolved.'[1] What is the point which this pugnacious writer, whose statements seem incomplete without the citing of some slighting comparison, is trying to prove? Why all these arbitrary divisions, these useless assessments in India's national artistic legacy?[2]

The parochial school of art criticism will hear of no equality in Indian art. The shouting-down of the other man is the only hope of advertisement for its own wares. Such narrow and prejudiced views cannot help to interpret the grand and spacious, and unrestricted outlook upon Indian art of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, to the world today.

Fergusson was unable to see any trace of Hinduism in the works of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Our pugnacious author sees in this a whole host of aspersions, inferences, and reflections upon his own *purdah* views of Indian art. It is an outrage; so he retaliates, and Mr Havell is so very generally either the aggressor in controversy, or else replying to the imaginary arguments of a mythical opponent that it is almost a relief to read his reply—however wide of its mark—to a genuine statement: 'The Mogul Emperors and their Viceroys made use of Hindu genius to glorify the faith of Islam. The Anglo-Indian and the tourist have been taught' (Mr Havell detects the malign Western 'Pedagogue' in every deficiency in Indian art) 'to admire the former and

[1] Ibid; page 132.

[2] That I am very far from being a detractor from the glories of Buddhist and Hindu art is, I trust, proved in my books and pamphlets particularly. Cf., *The Women of the Ajanta Caves*, *Jottings at Ajanta*, *Mural Paintings of the Bombay School*, *The Art of Elephanta* and *The Charm of Indian Art*.

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to extol the fine aesthetic taste of the Moguls. . . . Even the term 'Mogul' architecture is misleading, for as a matter of fact there were but few Mogul builders in India. . . . Mogul architecture does not bear witness, as we assume, to the finer aesthetic sense of Arab, Persian, or Western builders, but to the extraordinary synthetical power of the Hindu artistic genius.'[1]

This writer however seems to concede that there was something to be said for the Emperor Akbar. 'Akbar was an Indian of the Indians, and disgusted his orthodox Musulman courtiers by the enthusiasm with which he entered into the study of Hindu philosophy and religious teaching.' As Akbar was 'Indian' Mr Havell shows us how 'Akbar's palace at Agra and the buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri are essentially a new development of the same Buddhist-Hindu craft tradition which had created the architecture of the preceding Musulman dynasties in India.'[2]

We are next permitted to learn how the Moguls set about this vicarious art—so wrongfully attributed to them. Mr Havell's particular example is the great mosque at Fatehpur-Sikri: 'Probably one of Akbar's Persian painters drew a rough sketch of one of the famous mosques at Ispahan or Baghdad, and the Emperor showed it to his Indian master-builders and said, "Build me a mosque like this." The result was an entirely original Indian building, as original as it would have been had Akbar been Christian and commanded them to build him a cathedral like Canterbury or Notre Dame de Paris.'[3]

This is would-be history, not a *jeu d'esprit*; for Mr Havell is not a waggish writer. He can be pompous, accusative,

1 *Indian Architecture*, second edition, page 3.
2 Ibid., pages 167-8.
3 Ibid., page 171.

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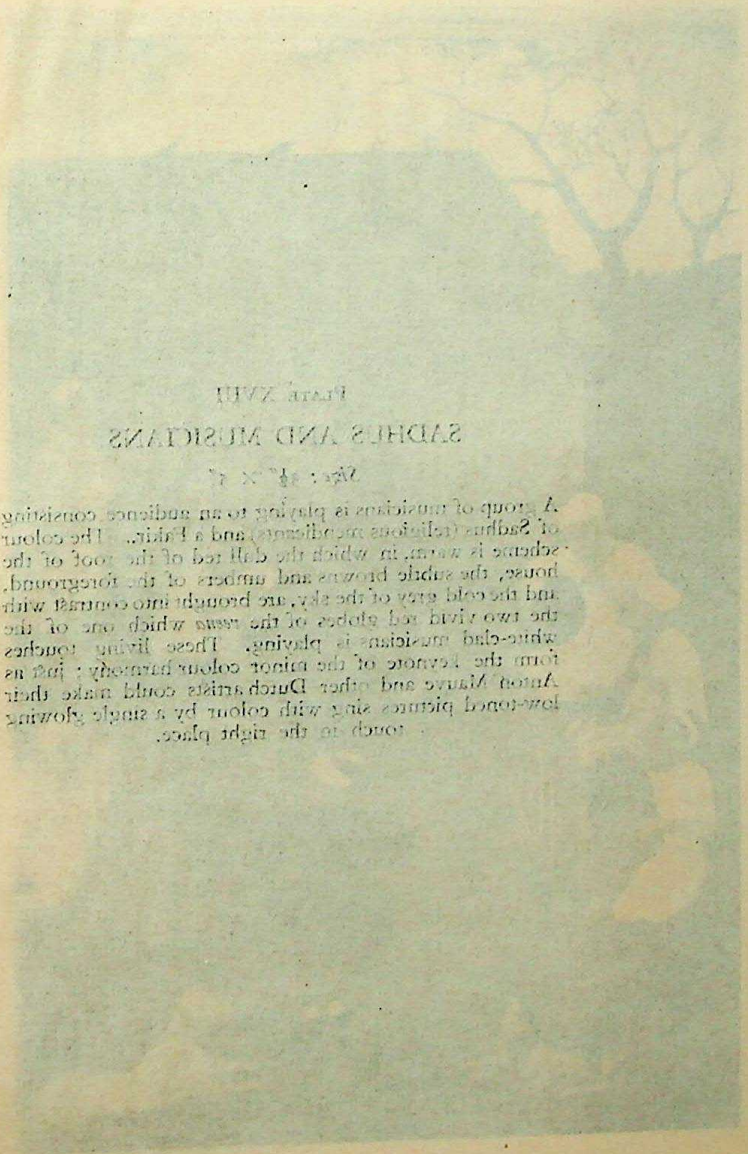

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PLATE XVIII

SADHUS AND MUSICIANS

Size: $3\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5''$

A group of musicians is playing to an audience consisting of Sadhus (religious mendicants) and a Fakir. The colour scheme is warm, in which the dull red of the roof of the house, the subtle browns and umbers of the foreground, and the cold grey of the sky, are brought into contrast with the two vivid red globes of the *veena* which one of the white-clad musicians is playing. These living touches form the keynote of the minor colour harmony; just as Anton Mauve and other Dutch artists could make their low-toned pictures sing with colour by a single glowing touch in the right place.

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PLATE XVIII

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denunciatory, despairing, but the lighter literary graces do not flow from his pen. His works are devoid of humour. He evidently never shared in a 'Social' of Indian art students or he would surely sometimes have remembered that the Indian is a great humorist, and not at all the sombre individual he is sometimes reputed to be in the West. The Indian student well knows how to adapt the adage, 'Save me from my friends', to the present crying needs of Indian art, and is not likely to be betrayed by Mr Havell's hotchpotch of history into supporting an India-*versus*-Mogul way of looking at the subject.

Indian opinion *generally* and very properly regards both the Mogul and the Ajanta traditions as emphatically Indian; and makes no cheeseparing effort at apportioning praise; nor does it invite the world to arbitrate as if between two rival candidates for the laurels, as Mr Havell is doing all the time.

It is a pity that English officialdom in India shows a marked tendency to take Havellism, which is not a working proposition for artists, but at best an idealistic theme for drawing-room meetings, seriously, and to talk plaintively of 'Indian art' when the people want to talk of patronage and facilities for Indian students. After all, it was the 'nation of shopkeepers' which started the Indian Government Art Schools in some unwonted outburst of (perhaps contagious) artistic enthusiasm. The fit passed almost as soon as it came, and has left India with the spectacle of British officialdom —imitating the famous flight of Frankenstein—in the act of running away from the Monster of its own creation![1]

However, Bombay has refused to repeat the shibboleths of Havellism. Instead of throwing up the sponge and

[1] Fortunately the firm personal patronage of the Governors of Bombay has aided its art school much.

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joining in abuse of a genuine constructive system of art education,[1] it has shown Indian art students to be by no means confined to a single school of expression in the graphic and plastic arts ; but to be highly successful in many methods. So the double of that art critic of the Reindeer-Age who looked in on us at the commencement of this discussion, attacked Bombay strongly, and warned it that whatever it was now doing in art or would do in the future was, and would be 'on the wrong lines' !

The big issue of helping the Indian artist by providing, in India itself, the facilities for training which he demands have been obscured by skilfully raised debates on the subject of how, when, and where Indians ought to paint. So the world is actually supposed to believe in an art revival by means of restrictions upon foreign painting mediums, methods, styles, and nationalities ! This quaint conceit, by reason of its easiness of comprehension and superficial altruism has been adopted in many quarters ; especially by Europeans, both in India and London, who like to lay the flattering unction to their souls that they at least *do* abjure Western influence in Indian art.

However 'it's an ill wind', as they say ; and India's deficiency is Europe's opportunity ; for as the Indian is deprived of the facilities for advanced training in his own country he naturally escapes these parochial disabilities and seeks for the necessary instruction in Europe.[2] This is

[1] This system and some of its results have been discussed in my book *Mural Paintings of the Bombay School.*

[2] See Introduction. 'No wonder that it is now pretty generally recognized that in order to gain inclusion in the privileged band of " the pupils of Mr Havell and Dr Avanindrenath Tagore," whose prospects are amply cared for in London, and India, every candidate should have his South Kensington certificate in his pocket.'—*Times of India*, 26 November 1931.

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one, and only one, of many amusing corollaries upon Mr Havell's propaganda, and goes oddly with his wonderful indictment: 'The Italian Renaissance marks the reversion of Christian art to the pagan ideals of Greece, and the capture of art by the bookmen, leading to our present dilettantism and archæological views of art. When a new inspiration comes into European art it will come again from the East; . . . but what irony there is in the present spectacle of the Christian nations of Europe, in the twentieth century, using their influence to paganize the art of Asia!'[1]

Here, apparently, 'vigour failed the towering ecstacy' as it failed Dante at the climax of his Vision—presumably because Mr Havell laid down his pen, to burst into tears! This is the sort of thing that has terribly frightened us all, though the taunts are all sound and fury, signifying nothing except that Mr Havell objects to the Antique Class[2] as much as he does to the Life Class. The confusion between art and ethics in this remarkable outburst is however most significant. For of course the plaster cast or the living model, are both merely a means to an end with the student, whether he is occidental or oriental, and not the end itself. If, as Mr Havell implies, Raphael's divine Madonna del Granduca is pagan, what is the sublime *Trimurti* of the Elephanta Caves?

It is perhaps not unpatriotic for one who has spent thirteen years in charge of an official Indian Art School to admit that art is *not* our nation's strongest point; and Mr Havell may well be right when he says: 'The Indian artist lives in a world of his own imagination, where the stolid

[1] *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition, page 189.

[2] 'Greek and Roman casts were thrown into a pond' complained Mr Atul Bose, the Calcutta artist, in a recent interview in the *Statesman* in the course of a protest against the prevailing craze,

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Anglo-Saxon is unable to follow him.' But are not all artists the Indian artists' kith and kin? This rare and welcome bulls-eye is (inevitably) followed immediately by another bad shot! 'Until the Western pedagogue brought Indian culture into contempt and stifled' (etc, etc) 'the Indian artist found that his traditional methods were perfectly adequate for obtaining that response from his public which every artist needs.' [1]

Well, perhaps! But I live too near to the manifestations of Indian artistic genius—too close to the realization of the needs and aspirations of many hundreds of Indian art students to be bludgeoned into agreement with those whose dilettante view of art and history have been responsible for the erroneous theories we have been noticing.

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[1] *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition, page 235.

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EPILOGUE

The consequences of the wide circulation which the doctrines of Mr Havell and his friends have received, have been of serious import for India, in which country they have never obtained wide popularity among the people. Their true home is Europe.

In his interesting book *Bombay*, Mr Samuel T. Sheppard has written : 'There has been sharp public controversy over this energetic Bombay Revival, as the school has carried its reconstructive work in Indian art considerably beyond the sentimental restricted teaching of the 'New Bengal School' which its founder, Mr Havell, based upon archaisms, and which (though to some extent patronized in Europe) has never secured anything like the wide-spread popular support which the Indian public have accorded to the Western Indian movement.' The short-sighted doctrines of Mr Havell and his friends have to their credit a long tale of disaster—the wreckage of several truly constructive plans, and the reduction of the Indian Art Schools either to mere technical institutions, or to schools for a painfully limited style of water-colour painting.

The radical error of the India Society of London lies not only in the fact that it has been the responsible sponsor, patron, and guarantor of these apocryphal gospels of Indian art. The India Society has been only one of the dupes of special pleaders, and might be compassionated, though hardly admired, for its pathetic credulity. The real and genuine grievance in Western India against the India Society is due to the serious opposition or indifference shown by the Society to the only genuinely constructive and productive

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schemes to encourage Indian Art which have been put forward in our time; and also to the importance it has given to the promulgation of weak standards and values in contemporary art in India.

Sir Francis Younghusband in his reply in the *Times of India* of 20 May 1931 to some of Bombay's protests on this subject, wrote that 'before the construction of New Delhi was begun, the Society appealed on general grounds to the Governments in India and London for an extensive use thereon of Indian artists and craftsmen in all branches of architecture, sculpture, and painting, a recommendation to which for one reason or another no adequate effect was given'.

Yet 'for one reason or another' the India Society, when consulted on the subject by the Government, actually *condemned* the very promising scheme to the same purpose which had been suggested by Lieut. de la Coze in 1920! *Why* did the Society strongly support Mr Havell's querulous and hopelessly blank condemnation of that definitely constructive proposal, instead of making use of it to the utmost as the basis for utilizing the unique opportunity of New Delhi, for helping art in India? Mr Havell's pages are full of peevish criticisms of New Delhi, and annoyance with its architects, whom he accuses of helping the Bombay School!—whereas both Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker are absolutely guiltless of the least suspicion of that heinous crime![1]

[1] 'The Architects of New Delhi, who as universal providers were commissioned to restore the arts of the Empire, commend these paintings' (i.e. those of the Bombay School's students) 'and propose that the same rhythmical formula which can easily be adjusted to all the races of mankind, as an ingenious rhymester turns out limericks, shall be taught in our Imperial School of Design at Delhi,' etc. —*Indian Sculpture and Painting*, second edition, page 259. Only one comment can adequately meet this hopeless jumble of inaccuracies—namely the Caterpillar's crushing reproof to Alice: 'It's wrong from beginning to end!'

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But Mr Havell's complaints are not fortified by a single constructive idea which could be cited in the same breath as the sound practical beginning for helping the dying Indian art crafts, put forward by Lieut. de la Coze. When condemning that scheme this critic was careful to remind Government of his own book *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India,* in which he had the congenial task of attacking the views of my predecessor, the late Mr Cecil Burns. It was published in 1912 and the kindest thing that can be said for it is that its involved and chaotic arguments and objections were admirably adapted to bewilder the reader, and effectively prevent the authorities from making or marring in a matter of such prodigious complexity.

Again, in regard to painting, sculpture, and architecture, why did the India Society emphatically fail to fulfil its promise to help forward the scheme which has long been discussed and approved and championed in Western India, known as the 'Prize of Delhi'? This would have provided necessary encouragement and raised the standards of efficiency for the Indian Art Schools, and was laid before the India Society at their Conference at Wembley in 1924 by Lord Lloyd, one of the ablest art patrons that Western Indian art has known in our own times.

At first, it is true, the India Society appeared delighted with this scheme; as it has never vouchsafed any explanation to the public for its extraordinary action in afterwards pitching it overboard, Bombay has another good reason for its doubts of the India Society. For it may be recalled that at the Conference at Wembley Sir Francis Younghusband (Chairman of the India Society) said: 'We have had a very interesting and valuable discussion this afternoon, and

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definite practical proposals put before us. I now beg to move: That the Committee of the India Society be empowered by the Conference to take into consideration all the valuable suggestions brought forward with a view to further action. I think it very desirable that the results of this Conference should not be lost, but that the Committee of the Society should take them up definitely and practically, and see what measures may be taken to bring the suggestions that have been made into practical effect.' I have not the slightest doubt, nor has anyone who has lived through, and studied at first hand the subsequent history of art in Western India, that this most desirable scheme or its equivalent would have been put into being had the India Society helped India, when help was really and urgently required.

Far from sharing the indifference or actual hostility of the London 'experts' on Indian art, to the Indian-born schemes for the furtherance of Indian art *in India*, the people of Bombay have strongly supported real constructive efforts, such as the Prize of Delhi Scheme, and the attempt (which was part of that scheme) to ensure that, in the vast enterprise of New Delhi, a few Indian artists and art students might at least be allowed to obtain some employment there in the way of mural decoration. Not a word was heard from the India Society to support this most natural demand, in spite of Lord Lloyd's appeal on this subject at the Wembley Conference. The Governor of Bombay, Sir Leslie Wilson, however, fought long and earnestly to secure this modicum of patronage from that great enterprise,—this hardly perceptible gesture which should at least signify that the authorities had recognized practically the *fact* that there actually are artists and art schools in India. This favour *was* secured for Bombay

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in 1928-29 after many years of efforts (Bengal did not participate).[1] Although it has been followed, and eclipsed (so far as publicity goes[2]) by the decoration of India House, Aldwych, by Indian students of South Kensington (according to the usual rule of proportion which accords a hundred per cent publicity to Indian art in London, and one per cent to contemporary art in Western India), yet a principle was thereby formulated, a right-of-way for Indian artists and art schools established, which I believe has set an example both as to India's opportunities and capacities. The present Governor of Bombay, Sir Frederick Sykes, has done much to consolidate and to stabilize the position which has been gained with so much difficulty; and to this end have helped, in many different ways, Painting, Architecture, and Sculpture, in Bombay,—so far as a difficult financial period has allowed of material improvements being secured. Sir Phiroze Sethna, one of Bombay's most trusted leaders, has on two occasions,—in 1924 (prior to the Wembley Conference) and again in 1932, moved constructive Resolutions in the Council of State on behalf of Indian artists and art schools, efforts which have had most encouraging after-effects. Mr M. R. Jayakar has long given his valuable public support to this cause; and Mr Kanaiyalal Vakil has worked devotedly and written copiously on behalf of this genuine revival—which is the first Peoples' Movement (as contrasted with mere literary coteries) on behalf of contemporary Indian art in British India.

The sad truth however is that the India Society has been for many years a well of captious criticisms of all plans for helping Indian art (that have not emanated from Bengal),

[1] Mr Shillidy (Industries and Labour Secretary) stated this in the Council of State debate on Sir Phiroze Sethna's Resolution, 8 March 1932.

[2] See Introduction.

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rather than an instrument for helping to increase effectiveness by supplying the motive power for assisting in their realization. The voluble exponents of Calcutta have enjoyed this Society's support for propaganda in which actual production in art stands at about half per cent of the total output of the propagandists, the remainder of it consisting of vocal and literary disquisitions. But though the great art-producing districts of Western India are not so audible, the Indian artists are there, and they are increasing, in spite of all handicaps; and the India Society would do well to bear in mind that a good artist does not talk while he is working.

Our British-made theory that art in India should, and therefore *must* be either 'Indian' or nothing, is not quite so simple and conclusive a proposition as it sounds to those who are accustomed to reel off just such easy and empty sentiments as this. For though we look for Italian art in Italy, and Dutch art in Holland, we do not ask from modern painters in those countries the art of Botticelli, or of Pieter de Hoogh, before we can consent to admit that they are either Italian or Dutch. Indian art today must be given the same freedom for expansion in all the directions it cares to follow; and in a continent of so many different races, those directions may well be legion, and *still Indian*.

Besides their stultifying reactions on hopeful attempts to improve the status, efficiency, and scope of art in India, the doctrines upon which the India Society has smiled for so long have laid a train of applauded but spurious Indo-European activities in art.

One must do *something*, it is argued; so instead of helping Indian art *in India*, the schemes that have gained the direct or indirect support of the India Society have all centred in England! Thus the India Society has shown considerable

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activity in trying to popularize and finance its plans for an Oriental Museum in London, and for Exhibitions of restricted scope in London.

How far exactly and to what degree of legal significance the Society is 'officially' implicated in these various schemes, or the activities of its prominent members, does not affect this main error; for when five out of seven members of a Committee are members of the India Society's Committee, it is not much help to the Society to disown its connexion with the matter.

The *Times of India* of 20 May 1931, put the case bluntly but not unfairly: 'As to Sir Francis Younghusband's statement that the Society has no responsibility for the opinion expressed, or the action taken by its individual members in their own capacities, and that the India Society has no connexion with the Burlington Fine Arts Club's Exhibition, we have only to remark that we drew attention to the fact that the Committee for this Exhibition "includes among its seven members the Marquess of Zetland, Lord Lytton, Sir William Rothenstein, Sir Atul Chatterjee, and Mr Laurence Binyon". If this is not the India Society's Committee it is at least as much of it as could well be packed on a committee of seven—and we are afraid that Sir Francis Younghusband's quibble becomes a distinction without a difference.'

There are really two ways in which the Western world can look at modern Indian art. One is the view that India is a museum and emporium, and must be strictly preserved as such by an admiring (but unhelpful) world, for the world's instruction and amusement, and for the satisfaction of the acquisitive instincts of the few. Of course if you are a holder of this view—the view of the foreign collector,

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not the foreign patron—you will demand from India only 'oriental art', with the indubitable hall-mark of the past.

The other view—that held by unbiased thinkers who are fortunately becoming more and more numerous in India—is that the Indian must naturally paint primarily in and for India. And the sympathetic individual who thinks in this way will not preach an impossible code of abstinence from Western influence to Indian artists, but will co-operate in helping the Indian student to obtain in India the best oriental and Western examples. He will not, by trying to remove the 'accursed thing' out of his reach, force him to seek information in the cheap Western prints, photographs, and films which flood the Indian markets, or to go to Europe in order to obtain freedom of instruction.

For India is not still living in the seventeenth century. Her fashions in art have changed and will change again; and still they will remain fundamentally, and in the fullest sense of the word, Indian.

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